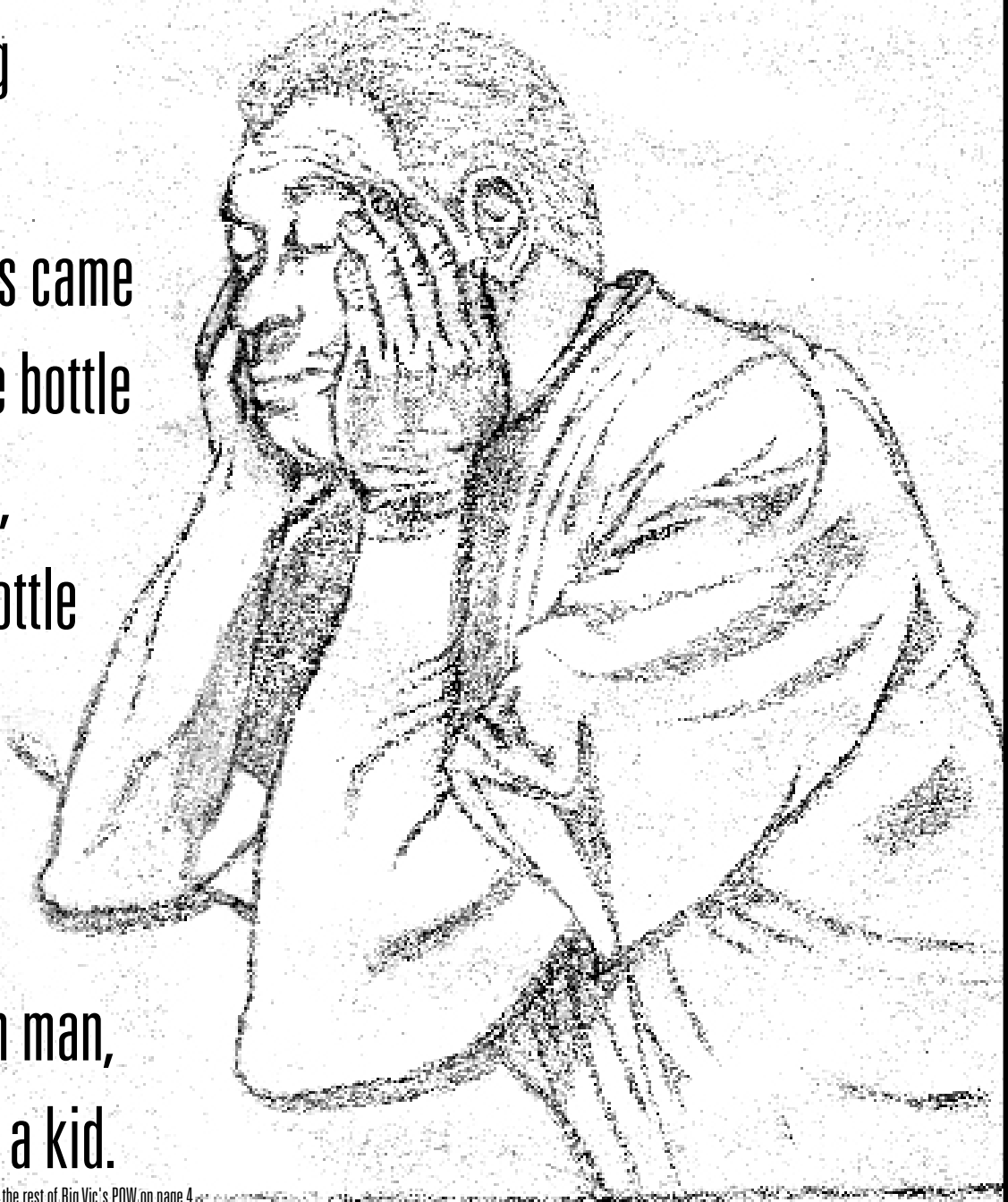


I messed up
When it went from stealing
to dealing
Body went numb,
So I had no feeling
I messed up
When my problems came
I just turned to the bottle
Living life too fast,
Runnin' at full throttle
I messed up
When I caught
this nine-year bid
Livin' like a grown man,
But I'm really just a kid.



check out the rest of Big Vic's POW on page 4

There is so much that any reasoning person would find irrational about the "criminal justice" system, including the name itself, since it is characterized by so much injustice. But nowhere is it more irrational than when, by simply declaring that words mean what we want them to mean, it can turn children into adults, as if by waving a magic wand it becomes so.

Two weeks ago, the very first youngster so designated in Santa Clara County was sentenced to 36 years to life in prison for the crime of murder that he and a fellow gang member committed in 2004. At the time, he barely "qualified" under the provisions of Proposition 21 — he had entered his 14th year of life less than two weeks before. Since then, he was at first housed in the max, unit, then spent some time in the CYA (California Youth Authority), and most recently he has "lived" isolated behind a solid steel door on which there is a large sign stating emphatically: "Do not talk with this minor."

To read the newspaper accounts at the time of his sentencing, one could only conclude that this man-child presents a dangerous threat to society. But we know this youngster too well, and we know the true threat is posed by society's uninformed and irrational judgments. Ironically, he's grown up with *The Beat*, turning from immature child to mature young man, reflected week after week in what he has written us from behind that steel door.

As James prepares to enter a new world of adult incarceration, we want our readers to see who this child has become, and why judging the acts of children under the same standards we apply to adults makes all of us guilty of hypocrisy, irrationality and legal trickery not befitting a country that calls itself civilized.

Below, we present five of his vintage pieces, which trace an arc from boy to man. The first of these, "Young," was written shortly after he came to juvenile hall. In it, he sounds like so many other children we put behind locked doors, though the beginning of a mind that was stirring even then can be seen between the lines — lines that he needed help to write at that age. But if you continue to the end, including our "From The Beat" responses, there is no way you can walk away without feeling how tragic and stupid it is to throw away our children, whatever they may have done.

With that, we bring you James, with our heartfelt "Thank you" for sharing your words and your life with us. It is a privilege and honor we will always treasure.

Young
What's up? How are you doing? Pues, me coo' — I guess I have a lot of things on my mente though.

Right now I'm being charged with serious crimes, so I feel depressed. Yeah, I didn't even have a fitness hearing; they sent me straight to adult court, and most likely what will happen is I will get life. My view is that sentence is all bad because, for those homeboys who know me, they know I am still hella young, and for those who don't know me just put it like this — at my age you would be still going to the skating rink.

I'm young, but don't think that you could use that against me. I will still and always walk around with my head held high to the sky no matter what situation I'm in.

Pues, there ain't really no theme to this piece, just thought I'd tell all that no matter what situation you're in, you will get out eventually. Alrato.

—James

From The Beat: We can't imagine the thoughts running through your mind right now — we can't even begin to think of what it must be like to be facing life at any age, let alone at one so young. You come with what seems to us to be a contradiction — while you're facing life, you still say everyone will get out of the situation he or she is in eventually. How are you maintaining your sanity as you face such heavy circumstances? What would you have to say to your homies in the Hall who are getting ready to return to the streets?

Dreams

Do you ever have dreams
That are as wonderful as mine
Soaring in the sky
Among the beautiful stars that shine
Or walking free of these chains
That seem to bound me for forever
Taking a stroll with my baby boy
In some beautiful sunny weather
What do all these dreams mean
Are they someday gonna come true
If it's possible, then enlighten me
On what I'm required to do
Am I required to hope and hope
That one day they become my reality
Or should I just refuse to come back to these bricks
Don't you see that I'd so much rather be in a state of fantasy
Where nothing goes wrong
And I'm allowed to live life in happiness and peace
Where you live on and on with the ones you love
And no one has the fear of the day they would become deceased
Where I bond with my son, over some life lessons
I'll admit that these are the best
No pains, no worries, no sadness, no hurries at dream moments like that
Only love and happiness in my chest
So tell me, is there a way I can make these dreams come true
The ones that in my memory pond are so divine
Wouldn't you want your dreams your reality, too
If your dreams were as wonderful as mine

—James

From The Beat: There is something so touching about this piece — as there is about everything you write — that we almost don't want to refer back to the reasons you are here, the reasons you have to wonder if these wonderful dreams will ever come true. You must never forget (and, in truth, we know you have not forgotten) those who can never dream again, and whose dreams, therefore, will certainly never come true. Having (reluctantly) said that, however, we remain in awe of your abilities to think and feel, and to convey those feelings in words on a page. No one can know if those wonderful dreams will ever be reality,

James, but there are other dreams we hope you have, or will have, that can and must come true: that you are a great teacher; that through your great heart you can reach deeply into the hearts of others, and by doing so, prevent even just one young person from having to wonder, from some cold cell, if his or her warm dreams will ever come true. We are so serious when we tell you that you are blessed with both humanity and intelligence in abundance — enough to turn your personal tragedy into a personal triumph. Your choices (as a child) have led to the end of others' lives. Your profound gifts (as a man) can lead to the beginning of freedom and real life for those who are still lost. Those are our dreams for you (and for us), and we have no doubt in the world that they can come true.

Gordo

Mijo, you find me writing you this letter tonight. To explain why a few things are obviously different in your life, and also in hopes that — although I hope someone reads this to you now — maybe one way or another when you're all grown up you could somehow come across this letter.

First off, let me begin by saying that I love you and truly hope you can forgive me for all that I have put you through. Mijo, the reason why I was not around when you were born and I'm still not around now as you continue to grow, is not because I didn't want to be there for you, but because before you were born I did something that at the ignorant age of fourteen, I thought was a good decision. But it changed my whole life around and affected yours also.

I hate having to watch you grow through pictures because if I would've listened to what my loved ones who would beg me to leave the gang had said, and who now are nice enough to bring me pictures of you, I wouldn't be having to watch you grow this way. You don't know (and I hope you never have to know) how much it hurts inside when you tell me you love me, or at the end of a visit when Abuelita tells you it's time to go, you run to me and hug me and say, "I want to stay with Papi!"

It hurts me because I hate having to watch you go, and because the last abrazo (hug) I get from you brings me back to reality, which is that I will have to wait a whole 'nother week before I can get another one. I'm tired of having to see you like this, Gordito. But unfortunately that one decision that I made before you were born has given me a lifetime of prison as a punishment, and that's the only way I will get to spend time with you.

They gave me 36 to life Mijo, and truthfully, the only reason that I'm down about it is because... broken are the dreams of me being out there with you, showing you how to drive or talking to you about girls when the time comes. If it were up to me, Mijo, I'd be there with you in an instant. But I no longer have that choice, since I practically gave my life to the system.

But what I really want you to know, Isaac, is that just because my life is like this doesn't mean that yours has to be like this also. Do good in school and study hard so when you grow up you can hold conversations with intelligent individuals. Don't just study hard for that though, but for yourself so you can have the satisfaction of knowing that although you were raised in the barrio you were able to get out of there by studying hard and wanting to be something in life.

Hopefully you'll understand this letter that I wrote for you Mijo, because all I want is the best for you, and your forgiveness for my absence. On that note, take care and always keep in mind que te quiero con todo mi Corazon (I love you with all my heart).

—James

From The Beat: Reading this (November 2006) letter, we can feel your heart breaking, James, and it makes us feel like our hearts are breaking too. We keep looking at that advice to Isaac about studying hard for his own sake, not just to converse with intelligent people (you can do that quite well already), and wondering how different your life would be now had someone given you that advice — and had you taken it! We hope this doesn't make you feel worse than you already do, but we can't help but think that Isaac is both the unluckiest and the luckiest child in the world for exactly the same reason: he has you for a father.

Struggling To Survive

Struggling to survive
Struggling to keep this fire alive
Want to be set free
But it seems that freedom doesn't want me
Why is it that me and brick walls get along
What made me choose to boogie to this well-known gangster song
Why does the world seem to revolve around violence and corruption
Why is it that tragedy happens
In one neighborhood it's big
But niños mueren en neustros barrios todos los dias
(children are dying in our communities every day)
And that's the least of the discussion
Why do so many fall to the fabled stories that are told
Haven't they ever heard that just because it glitters doesn't mean it's gold
How many more boys and girls are gonna have to grow without a dad
How many more mothers are going to have to lose their babies,
resulting in them being eternally sad
How do we stop theses problems that are only getting worse
In what way may we discontinue this young Chicanos' curse
Maybe put down the cuetes and take it back to the old school
Where knuckling up would always come first throwing chingasos first
was the number one rule
Or better yet, striving to be successful
helping the raza come up on the social ladder
Happy to be a big shot in the world where PhD's matter
But who am I to ask these questions
I'm just another sad vato with a sentence of life
Just thought I'd write these thoughts of mine that I'm sure bring my
raza plenty of strife

—James

From The Beat: Sometimes, James, it's hard for us to keep in mind that you are but 16 years old and isolated from the world. You sound so wise for your years. So, we wonder, was there any other way you might have gained the insight and wisdom you so regularly display in these pages without having come through the crucible you have? In looking back,

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

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www.thebeatwithin.org

EDITOR'S NOTE	2
PIECES OF THE WEEK	4
CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK	5
STANDOUTS	8
SAN MATEO COUNTY	16
WEEKLY WRITINGS	17
VOICES IN SPANISH	XX
THE BEAT WITHOUT	XX



I Messed Up

I messed up
 When my pants began to sag a lil' lower
 Started pushin' weight instead of the lawn
 mower
 I messed up
 When I began to flash my rag around
 Throwin' gang signs up all over my town
 I messed up
 When I made my mom's cry
 Said I didn't care about life,
 Screw livin', I'm gonna die
 I messed up
 When I started livin' life like a fantasy
 Disrespected, neglected, didn't care about
 family
 I messed up
 When I was posted on the block all night
 Seen the enemies
 And it was funk on sight
 I messed up
 When I took the first hit of the blunt
 Got in the car, ridin' big, tryna stunt
 I messed up
 When I didn't want to go to school no more
 Put that hoodie on
 And went and robbed that liquor store
 I messed up
 When I stopped listening to my Pops
 Did a drive-by
 And got away from the cops
 I messed up
 When I had to carry my nine
 Grand theft auto from scraper to two-seaters
 I messed up
 When the girl that left,
 Might of been the one
 Did everything for me
 Helped me hide when I was on the run
 I messed up
 When I left the football field and b-ball court
 Starting playin' these females
 Like my name was Too Short
 I messed up
 When I began to do more dirt
 Caused my real loved ones a lot of pain and
 hurt
 I messed up
 When it went from stealing to dealing
 Body went numb,
 So I had no feeling
 I messed up
 When my problems came
 I just turned to the bottle
 Living life too fast,
 Runnin' at full throttle
 I messed up
 When I caught this nine-year bid
 Livin' like a grown man,
 But I'm really just a kid.

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Big Vic, we can tell that this piece is not fake and we thank you, once again, for sharing your thoughts with us. It's like you're speaking for thousands of people because all the reasons you mention for messing up, someone out there can say, "I feel you, cuzz." What did your Pops tell you that you didn't listen to? Why were you so attracted to this lifestyle? A lot of youth say it's hard for them to do what's considered "right" in society's eyes, but you know what? It is easier to break the rules than follow them. However, no matter how ugly today may be, with tomorrow comes the promise of a potentially better day, and the beautiful thing about your life story is that it is barely beginning. How would you like it to end?

Gotta Make It

Many thoughts come to mind
 As I look out to the sky
 Wishing I was free like a bird
 So I could fly so high,
 But I'm locked down in this cage
 Like a beast being tamed
 Don't fit this atmosphere good
 I must have been framed
 Truth be told
 I haven't been the same for a while
 Dudes talk,
 Then I call their bluffs,
 But no one answers when I dial
 Dudes really act like this time is a joke
 The judge don't play
 He ain't no hoax
 Actin' like some lil' ten-year-old kids
 Then crying like a ten-year-old
 When you get that ten year bid,
 But I won't get drawn into their whirlpool
 Street smarts, school smarts,
 I ain't never been no fool
 Got caught slippin' once
 Bet it won't happen twice
 I won't take no more chances
 Can't roll that dice
 Tryin' to be straight
 'Cause life sometimes swerves
 Expectin' a fastball,
 But life throws you a curve
 I won't strike out,
 I'm a homerun hitter
 Got way too much pride,
 So I'll never be a quitter
 I don't got nothing to hide
 That's why dudes get bitter
 Can't screw up no more
 Can't even litter,
 But with my family and friends
 That got love for me
 I'll never see the walls of the penitentiary.

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You mention in your piece that you haven't been the same for a while: "How so?" Big Vic, there's nothing wrong with having pride, but sometimes you have to swallow it. Why do you have to call other people's bluffs? Is it because it is something personal or because you don't like what you hear coming out their mouths? Being confrontational all the time will cause you to not have many friends. You may say you don't need friends, but you don't need enemies, neither. We love when you compose pieces like this. Keep them coming because you have a lot to teach and you've been there, done that. Maybe nothing can be done about your situation, but your words may make someone think twice before following in your footsteps. Did you have someone to tell you the kind of things you share with us when you were young?

Without Change, I'd Probably Be Dead

I would rather change my life, because if I kept it the same, then I would be in jail most of my life. And if I kept it the same, I would probably be dead, or doing stuff that I have no mind doing.

But I got to admit this is life is fun. But honestly, it's not the life for me. So the reason why I said that I rather change my life is because I want to be going to school all the time. I want to be able to have a family, and I don't have a family in jail or on the streets. I wouldn't want my kids doing drugs or going to jail all the time, and have kids young.

I also want to change my life because I have family, and I know right now my family needs me. So I've lived the rough life and now I'm ready to change.

-Skittles U5, SF/YGC

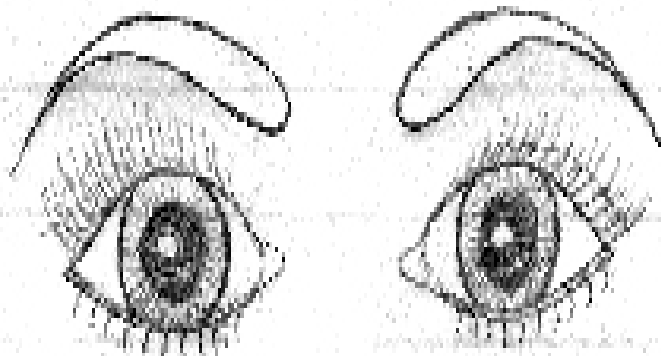
From The Beat: For all the fine reasons you listed, we hope you continue on the changes you want. We say "continue" because just wanting to change is the beginning of change itself. You've started down a new path. Keep putting one foot in front of the other, and you'll be amazed at how quickly you move from here to there.

Grow Up

This stuff is ridiculous like a playground
 Too immature to be CYA bound
 Laughin' at a joke
 That don't even make sense
 Livin' life on a dream,
 But it's all past tense
 It ain't their fault
 'Cause their minds ain't up to speed
 Want to be the center of attention
 'Cause that's what they need
 I'm just an observer on the outside lookin' in
 They playin' a game that they can't even win,
 But I don't laugh
 Barely crack a smile,
 But I ain't no different
 'Cause we all on file
 So I can't be the one to judge
 I'm wearin' the same clothes
 Eatin' the same shhh
 Only difference is I got a plan
 Don't plan on being a child all my life
 Want to be a man
 It's coo' for at times to be a lil' silly
 When they say, "I'll whoop you"
 I laugh and say really?
 But there's times to play
 And others to be serious
 Just leave me alone when I look kind of furious
 Don't say nothing to you,
 So don't say nothin' to me
 Came here solo,
 So why does staff classify the group as "we?"
 I ain't like no one else in here
 Actin' all tough,
 But in their eyes,
 I see fear
 Looking all foolish
 Like a child soon to be 18,
 Damn, it's no wonder
 Why y'all got no queen.

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That's the best thing for you to do is just laugh and ignore those who try to push your buttons. Don't worry about what they do. You're only behind bars to do one thing and that's serve your time and get out. What good does it do you to go off on someone? What will you be proving by doing so besides showing you're dumb? The only thing you'll gain from losing your temper is more time added to your sentence. For all of those who fit the description you gave us in your piece, just be glad you're not them. Some people never grow-up and some people are simply miserable and what others to be on their level. We know you're too smart to fall for their traps and mind games. Like you said, "There's times to play and others to be serious." This is one of those times to be serious about yourself and about getting your life back on track. How did you act like when you were the age that these youngsters you speak of?



Time Is More Important

I think time is more important because we measure everything in time. People work a 9 to 5, not a \$150 a day. Also time is precious because time will go by and you can't get yesterday back, but money is a cycle that will keep moving.

Also when you go to jail and they decide your sentence, they always choose to take your time and not your money. They give you a five-year sentence, not a \$15 fine.

And we have developed names like yesterday, today, tomorrow, and weeks to describe time, but we don't have a given name for money spent, or made or money to be made or spent. Also when you're locked up you count the days going by and not the money going by.

-Birdman U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is such a well-reasoned piece of writing that we had to give it a POW. We are particularly impressed by how you examined the names we give to periods of time but not to different uses for money. Well done. One correction, though. In criminal sentencing, money is often the penalty, as well as time. But we know that when our time runs out (as everybody's time will), we won't be asking for money...

You Are Forgiven

My life has been full of all different surprises. Friends come and go, same wit' the boys, too. It's okay, because the only person that stood next to me was my momma.

Dad, you thought you would come in every full blue moon... giving me so much bread that I didn't know what to do with it. You know, Dad, that I love money. You knew it made me so happy, so you thought you could make me happy by giving it to me. Dad, you can't buy my love, in fact, no one can. All I wanted was for you to show yo' heart to me.

Dad, even though you caused a lot of the pain to me and momma back in the days, I forgive you because I know your life ain't easy, too. I'm trying to really understand you and your life. I hope one day, when the time is right, we can have a better understanding relationship. Even though I can't see you, in my eyes momma says you still care. I feel you do, but you just don't know how to express yo'self.

-Ce Ce U5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Well, if your dad doesn't know how to express himself, you most definitely do! We are so impressed, not just by how well you write, but how much heart you bring to what you write. It's so easy to hate a father who bought you things but brought you pain. It's much harder, and reveals a rare degree of maturity, to try to understand that, like all of us, he came to be who he was through a path that included his own pains, his own disappointments, his own tragedies and his own triumphs. We would not be surprised if, between the two of you, you are the more mature, and you will be able to use that maturity when you are able to sit and talk with the man without whom you would not be. We don't know how long you will be here, but as long as you are, you will be a great Beat contributor.

Letter To My Mom

Mom, my beloved angel, my best friend
 I'm sorry I went on the crooked road
 And ended up in the dead end
 I know I caused you so much pain
 Headaches, sickness, and tears of worry
 I'm sorry that was the life it had to be for me
 I will change because I said and want to
 You don't have to worry, because it will come true
 You said I could be whatever I wanted to be
 All I had to do was keep my head up, keep myself free
 Mom, you are my idol, and I will be strong like you
 I will stop doin' thangs I do and start goin' to school
 And bein' the daughter of your dreams

-Ce Ce U5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We hope you show this beautiful letter to your mom so she will know that she has made a fine young woman. If course, no matter how beautiful the words you create are, the real beauty lies in what you do. So don't let your mom or yourself down.

My Revenge? Do Right And Stay Free!

Yeah man, it's yo boy JT. I am back again. They trying to play me up here. But I ain't trippin' though. They tryin' to send me to da Ranch. I'ma just do my time and go home. Next time I won't do what I did.

They go try to play. I am gone outsmart these people up here. When I get out I know what to do. Don't come back to this place and do the right thang. When I get out here. I am gonna spend more time with my family and get back to football, basketball and some more sports, feel. Got to do something good in your life. For once I am just gone do this program and go home.

-Young Jt U2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Whether they are "trying to play" you, or did you played yourself, if you plan to "outsmart" them by doing good and staying out, then that is the sweetest revenge of all! The only way to "outsmart" them is not to give them any reason to take you from what you want — your home, your family, your school and your sports. Sometimes it's easier to make those promises when you're locked up and can't make choices for yourself than when you are back in the same environment that tempted you in the past. So, don't forget to not do the things that got you caught up in the first place.

Change

I wouldn't necessarily say I would change my life, but I would change the maladaptive habits in my life because I feel like it has made my life harder than it is supposed to be to me. My mom's death was because of those habits, like not listening, trying to be grown and just being altogether disrespectful to women who made me. That's what I would change.

Change to me is something you don't like, it's not working out, like me being in jail. I want to change that because it is not working out for me. I could be doing better things like being a role model to my little cousin Zion, helping my auntie out around the house. That is what I would change.

RIP Moms

-Cuba U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: What we really like about this piece, Cuba, is the thought that went into it. You have clearly spent your time (wisely) examining your life, and deciding what parts of the way you've been living have been "maladaptive" — meaning (for readers who don't know), not benefiting you. Your mother's death, as tragic as it clearly was, seems like it served as a wake-up call to you, a sign that it was time to look inward and take control of those things you can control. We admire that so much! You need to take this to the next step, which is to follow through on all that you know you must follow through on. Zion needs you. Your auntie needs you. And you need you!

Overcoming Conflicts

My life has been stressful. I have been through major conflicts, but have overcome them. They have made me to be the stronger female/individual that I am today. I want to change parts of my life and not change some of it. The good, positive things in my life I don't want to change, because they aren't negative aspects that gon' put me down.

But the negative shhh in my life, that is damaging myself and others, I want to change and make better, because that shhh is gon' bring me nowhere. Loving myself includes making change, whether if it's difficult or easy. Life is hard, but it's up to you to make it into a good or bad day. For me, I'ma step ma game up and thrive for success. I'ma be a star when I'm out.

-Ce Ce U5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You've already changed something that's very important — your thinking! There is so much hope in this piece that we want to add our own hope to it, hope that you follow through and eliminate those things that are bringing you down and concentrate on those things that make success that much more likely. It's not a question of hard choices versus easy choices. It's a question of the hard choice of doing the same things and facing the same consequences or the hard choice of changing and bringing about a new life. We know what you are capable of, but only you can know whether you will live up to your capabilities.

Money

Man, money's not a thing to waste, you check game run away, but in your mind you still in the same place.

Money don't make da world go 'round but man time do, so hustling is straight up but da green is behind you.

Make your money once, and again it reminds you that time goes on while ya money lay beside you.

When it's all said and done and you lost, who gone find you?

No one will because ya money done assigned you.

Claiming you a hustler bring shame on da game, but ya money more important then the stain on ya name.

So in the end what you left?

Time, time again. So tell me what's important money or death.

-Quad U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Wow! The tragedy that we see so often is that not a lot of young people think about what's left "in the end." Instead, they think only about today, as if "the end" is not important. But when it comes — and it comes to everyone — it's not money we want or need. It's another minute, another hour, another day. When you're out of this place, what's your plan for earning the money everyone needs to live, while preserving your life and your freedom?

Don't Come Here

Don't come here

'Cause this ain't the place to be

Staff act hard

And that cell be stressing a ninja hard

And the barber be pushing back on that hairline

Food is garbage

And your clothes are blue and beige

With some fake kicks

Your P-O will try and help you,

But once you mess up,

They'll be against you

That's what my P-O did

When you go to court,

You put in a van with some ninjas

Whose breaths be kickin'

Then, once you're in front of the judge,

You be shivering and shhh

Hella nervous 'cause the white man

aka "the system"

Has your life in his hands now

Oh yeah

Then, you got the teachers

Some teach you some,

Then, there's one who talks,

But he don't always be true

Visits, can't see yo' girl

Only your legal guardian

One more thing:

If you do come,

Do your time

Don't let the time do you

For you cats in here,

Keep yo' head up,

But I'm out soon

So peace.

-Maine Bo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is one hella of a piece! You broke down how it is like to be locked up to a T. However, when you get out, are you going to stay out? Now that you know how ugly it is to be locked up, there should be no reason for you to come back, unless deep down inside you like this kind of treatment? Thank you for your words of advice and we hope we never see you in The Beat again!

It's Time For a Change

i think it's time for a change
to relieve myself of this self-cause pain
being on the block with a name
seeing myself in a blinded fame
blood and gunsmoke which i've seen
i need to take myself from this ignorance
barbed-wire fences and broken barbie dolls
people fight for no reason like a rebel without a cause
i used to love to be hella high when i'd dine
because i used to be on the streets like crosswalk
lines
the truth has come and brought with it tears
along with money, blood, sex and fears
i'm getting tired of seeing my homies getting shot
just because his house and his house is on different
blocks
i finally realize that a smile isn't forever
it's unpredictable like changes in the weather
i think it's time for a change
no more toy guns and shooting games
many say they' going to change when they get out
end up doing the same shhh, back in jail and wonder
why the pout
i need to put myself out of this range
why — because i think it's time for a change

-Lucky Loi, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You spit truth with more fire than a gun for hire, if only a reader is willing to feel before the burn of lead or steel. Yeah, it's no kind of life to get stuck in, 'cause it's a life you're sure to run out of luck in. And how many friends do you need to see bleed before you admit to yourself the desperate need for change. Everyone in the game is to blame for every death that came too soon to a youth and his rival, too. Thanks for the poem. We hope our readers are feeling you, so they can go home and make a new start. And it all starts with a simple (not easy) change of heart.

i'm getting tired of seeing my
homies getting shot
just because his house and his
house is on different blocks

Go Back In Time

I can think of a thousand times I had wanted to go back in time and change my life. I had wanted to change it because of all the mistakes I made, and the chances I threw away.

When I was growing up I looked up to all the bad people at home, and so I tried to do the same type of stuff as them. But since I wasn't meant to, I had always gotten caught.

Plus, when I was younger I was given so many chances to do better, but I didn't want to take it. I wanted fast money, the girls, and to stay with my family. Even though I would've left my family, I still wish I could change my life.

-Deezy U2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Sometimes we have to look outside our families and those we've modeled our lives after in order to find something positive and motivational. Sometimes, just the consequences of our mistakes motivates us to want more. It's a tricky thing, but you're obviously an intelligent individual who needs to make better choices. You'll get another chance to make those choices, but what will you do with it? The "fast things" you wanted did nothing but bring your life to a halt in the hall, or at least to slow down your own progress. How will what you've learned light your way to a better future?

Why Am I Here?

Sometimes I wonder why I'm here. Not here like jail, but on the earth.

To be real I don't deserve to be here. I mean I do stuff that people get killed for every day. I know I'm not going to be here for every day. I know I'm not going to be here for long. I don't think I'm going to make it until my 18th birthday but it is all good, though. I'm ready for it.

I've been had guns put in my face, I wasn't even trippin' -- to me it's like you're born to die. That is all you're promised in life. I just don't give a f*%^ about death, the only reason I'm alive right now is because of my brother Shan and my wife Bre. They both calmed me down and try to point me in the right direction. That is why I love them both so much.

I would do anything for them that includes dying I would instantly give my life for them. I hope that I don't have to so they don't feel bad for me dying, because regardless it will happen.

-Lil' Taz, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You answered your own question... you have not been treating your life like the precious thing that it is.... but look at your brother and your girl. These people love you, they care about you, they want you to live, THEY see your life as precious. You say you'd die for them, but of course what they really want is for you to live for them. The streets are cold, and like you say, they make it seem like a person might not make it to 18... but that's why a change is so valuable, so important: Because as this beautiful and powerful piece shows, love is stronger than the streets.

America's Most Recent Act of Imperialism

Well I'm pretty sure we all know what imperialism is, and if not it's basically what Bush is doing in Iraq right now. My guess is Bush basically wants to take over Iraq. He wants to replace the Iraqi government with a government that can be manipulated into thinking Bush is helping Iraq, when technically Bush is using that newly put government to implement this idea of a "better society" for Iraq. Thus ultimately giving Bush the power to create and establish laws in Iraq. What other reason would Bush have for being at war four years and still going?

He has to have some kind of plan to spend 2-3 trillion dollars on the death of many US soldiers and Iraqi citizens. Especially when there are many schools closing because of "Lack of funds" -- according to the government that approves of Bush.

They say that Bush is in Iraq to take over the supply of oil, along with the government system. Fat capitalist pigs like Bush love to practice imperialism because eventually it evolves into capitalism. And I believe he is going to want some of the money back he put into the war.

But where is he going to get it? Oil.

You tell me if people in jail should be heard!

-Angel Gator, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This piece just blew us away. Your insight, your thoughtfulness, your passion for the subject, your righteous rage. And then of course there's the challenge you put out at the end: Should people in jail be heard? Good question, and of course we think that of course they should be heard. But more importantly, a voice like yours will carry a lot farther if you stay out of jail. There were people -- true revolutionaries and true leaders -- like Malcolm X, Chavez, Che, Martin Luther King -- but we haven't had one in a while. The next generation needs to pick up the fight for justice. And people like you are the hope of that next generation. But how will you lead if you are following the trail of doom straight into incarceration? A person with you has it in him to save the world. But first, how are you going to save yourself? What do you need and how will you get it?

When I was growing up I looked up to all the
bad people at home, and so I tried to do the
same type of stuff as them.

What Kinds of Problems Did You Have on the Outs?

Part Two:

Well my mom and my grandma would fight, verbally, when I was about eight years old — and I didn't now how to make them stop when I would come back home from school. So I would just walk straight to my room in total silence, and then I'd watch TV. and play my favorite video game, Tekken 5 — I'd play for at least an hour.

Then one time after I turned nine years old, when I was in my bedroom and my grandma was in the kitchen washing dishes, my mom walked in the front door and she said, "Is there any thing you want from the store?" — but she said it in a mean way. My grandma didn't like the way she said it, so she just ignored her and kept on washing the dishes. Then my mom was like, "Why are you not talking to me?"

So my grandma said, "You know, you could have said it more nicer." And my mom said, "I'm sorry, Mama, would you like me to get you some dinner from the store, so you don't have to cook?" Then Grandma answered in a nice way, too. "Yes, and can you bring some drink back for us to drink? Thank you." So Mom went to the store. And that was one of the nice times I can remember, when they didn't fight with each other.

Then one day my grandma and I were talking. I was sitting on the couch and she was sitting in her chair — and she would always sit so that her feet got lifted up off the ground. And sometimes we would read the Bible together, and this one time I remember I asked her, "Why do you and Mom argue all the time?"

"Well," she answered, "because your mother needs to learn to be respectful to her elders." That's what she told me. "Well, I guess I do too," I offered insincerely. And Grandma just said, "Well, you're better than your own mother!" (LOL, meaning, we both laughed.)

Then when I was about ten years old, there was this time my mother started to chase me around the house with a broom! That's about the time in my life when I started not wanting to be around her anymore. So I told my grandma what happened and how I felt, and my grandma told my mom, "You can't stay, because I don't like the people you bring to my house." And Mom left the house for about three months but then came back, thinking we'd forget about it, which we did. But we didn't forget to tell her not to bring any more strangers into the house. So she never did bring strangers to the house no more. "Thank god she didn't," I was all I could say.

Sometime when I was about twelve years old, I asked my grandmother, "Well, can we go to Auntie Loretta's house?" Grandma said, "Yes, just as soon as I finish washing these clothes." It took about two-and-a-half hours, but it was fun, too, because that's when I first learned how to wash clothes. That was cool! Then when we finished washing the clothes and got ready to go, someone knocked on the door, and guess who it was? Loretta! She was thinking about us, she said, and she was in the neighborhood, so she came to pick us up to go to church together and then visit at her house.

I said that we had just finished the laundry and were about to leave to go to her house. Before we all walked out the door though, we checked the phone for messages and my mother had called and left a kinda good but also kinda bad message. She said, "I'm coming to church with you all," that was the good part, "but I'm in the hospital. I just had a heart attack, and the doctors want to keep me overnight to see what's wrong with my heart and why I had that attack — and I wasn't doing anything. Oh, by the way, I'm dying of cancer in my brain and in my liver." That's what started me having bad anger problems, because I was not going to have my mother for much longer. So that made me start hating myself. Man, I felt like shhhh!

Then I turned thirteen. I got promoted to the Sixth Grade. I started getting into more fights with kids — and with my mother, and she started throwing knives, glasses, plates at me! Then, one day, my mom started to beat me with a broom,

and she broke it over my head. She sliced my head with the broom and left a three-inch scar on the left side of my face. So my step dad called the cops. And you know what the freakin' cops did? They handcuffed me — and they did nothing to my mother!

That was bullshhhh! So I started hating her — I was wishing she would die — because they took me outside and talked to me and didn't say nothing to her. When they brought me back inside, I went straight to my room and shut the door. Then my grandma came home ten minutes later, seen the cops and said, "What's going on here?" Nobody said nothing. Then she went to my room and saw me crying. She asked me, "What's wrong?" I said nothing — but showed her the left side of my face and my wrists.

So then after I turned fourteen, one day I went to school and the teacher asked me, "What happened to you?" When I told them, they called CPS (Child Protective Services). Then they asked me, "Was your grandmother there?" When I said, "No," they wouldn't let me go back home but took me to the police station in Alameda. From there they let me call my grandmother though, and my grandma was like, "Where are you?" I said, "At the police station." And then she was like, "Oh my God!" After that I heard her yelling at my mom — "Get out of the house! Get out!" — My mom was like, "What I ...?" — "Get out!"

All I heard after that was the door slamming shut! Then Grandma was like, "I'm sorry. Are you coming home?" I said, "I don't think so," and I started crying. She said, "Don't cry. Everything going to be okay." But then I had to go to the Center where they keep kids for at least twenty-four hours, until they find a placement. So I stayed there for about a day, and then I went to East Oakland to my first group home. It stood right by a blue corner-store on International Boulevard, but I forget the street address.

So I go and settle at the group home, and I made a friend my own age. We were roommates and we had a strong bond, even if sometimes we'd get into arguments and then stop talking to each other for about half an hour or so. Then one of us would go and apologize to the other. Well, one day me and her, we packed our stuff and ran all the way to Alameda, to my auntie's house. My friend asked me if my auntie would let us stay there, and I said, "Yes. But later she might bring us back." And my friend said, "Okay. At least we get out for a little bit!"

Then I wound up going to other group homes because I kept getting into fights. Then there was Starlight, and that was the last group home I've been in. And now, here I am in Alameda County Juvenile Hall.

-Lil' Snow Rabbit Meli, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We thought Part One of your story, published in last week's issue was powerful — and it was — but this story that gives us the story of how you grew up and especially the abuse to which your mother subjected you, is even more powerful. No wonder you wound up getting into fights at school, after school and in group homes. We're not excusing your temper or your impulse to act out violently on that temper, but it's pretty clear that it was beaten into you. Whether your mother's brain tumor was the secret cause of her violent outbursts or not, it wasn't fair to you — you certainly weren't responsible for it and didn't deserve to be treated that way. It is such a tragedy that your grandmother who clearly loves you so much couldn't both take care of her daughter and protect you from her (her daughter, your mother) at the same time. And it is an even greater tragedy that you ended up in the custody of the police twice when you were the victim of violent abuse! The problem now is that so long as you cannot get a handle on (which is to say, get control over) your temper and the fighting it leads to, you will not get back your freedom or get to go home either, whether any given fight was started by you or not — 'cause who starts a fight is a big deal to you in terms of fairness but not such a big deal insofar as it doesn't matter whether you start it or not: If you want to go free, you have to stop fighting. If anyone has learned at a still young and tender age that life is not fair, it's you. If life were a game of cards, you have not been dealt a good hand, but you still have to play the hand you get dealt to the best of your ability because the quality of your life is at stake — your freedom, to be sure, but also your safety and your future life (start a fight with the wrong person, maybe someone who's been abused as much as you and has a crazy temper, too, and someone might get killed, and two young lives would be destroyed forever, whoever survives.) We for sure don't mean that as a curse, but just a warning intended to remind you of just how important it is that you learn how to walk away from fights and control your temper, no matter what the other person does. Yes, it's unfair that you grew up with a violent and abusive mother, but you can't let her crazy temper ruin your life along with hers. Thank you for writing this amazing, powerful and insightful peace. You are in our thoughts and our prayers. Stay up. Much love and respect.

Nobody Knows The Pain

Her face smashed up
Against the concrete
She sittin' in the back seat
Staring at the police
Mascara running down
Her bleeding cheek
She smiling at the ceiling
He chokin' on his breathin'
Now she sittin' in come cell
While he burning down in hell
You think she care?
Hell to that guy, no
Nobody knows the pain
She been receiving
Ever since the beating
She good at not showing
Any sign of pain
How long can she preserve this life?
She a victim of being
Someone's wife
She tired
So she grabbed the knife
Turned around
And threw it at him
At his chest
But y'all don't wanna hear
The rest
Now I'm out
Peace

-Tatizzle, Marin

From The Beat: Are you writing about yourself and your situation? If this isn't you, is there a way to help this person out? Can you help her? Have you? What would it take to change the life she's living? And as for you, what's the plan upon leaving the hall?

He Murdered Her Mind

Just because he can
I can hear and feel her screams
And wails of pain
This man's making her go insane
Every night he beats her with his fist
So she run to her room
To slit her wrist
She screams and yells for him to quit
But her tears and cries jus keep him lit
He whispers threats in her ear
Every minute she feels is far
That he'll hurt her again
He said he was her friend
And would always love her
But she says friends was something they once were
'Til he killed her mentally
For her to find
He murdered her mind

-Baby G, Marin

From The Beat: My goodness, what a piece of work! You're a natural poet. Our hearts at The Beat totally go out to the girl, all girls, who was/are forced to suffer so much and so often. We can totally feel the pain this young lady has suffered, by reading your poem. What inspired you to write this? Are you the victim of this poem? If so, we hope you or this person find the strength to sent this guy to hell where he belongs.

Ever since the beating
She good at not showing
Any sign of pain

(Change) For Yourself

Changing, must come from within yourself. Change for yourself! Changing for someone else is going to be difficult to maintain. You will get more lasting benefits if you're changing for yourself.

Sometimes it be hard to meet the expectations and goals you hold for yourself. A lot of people be acting like characters, acting like they won't change. Your true characteristics will come out though sooner or later if you're willing to try and don't quit on yourself. A lot of people in this room know what I'm talking about: Just be yourself and yourself only!

I had to change for myself, not for my mom but for myself! And trust me, it has been so difficult and, at times, disturbing. Like today, for example, at dinner — when I had to go to my room. What did I say when I was sent to my room by staff? Nothing! Why? Because I was in the wrong. But now the old me would have been disrespectful!

Change yourself, for yourself! Young people, change before it's too late.

-Jermaine, 150 Crew

From The Beat: There is so much wisdom in this piece! If it was a cup, it would be overflowing, yeah, like a fountain! But now, there's still a deeper test of self-control — even when you're in the right and you know you're in the right, resist the impulse to be disrespectful. Show staff respect whether they're right or wrong. Do it often enough, and they'll begin to feel their mistaken judgment of you. Then, when you've changed their opinion of you by what you do and how you handle yourself, you'll have the chance to explain to them that you've been showing the self-discipline to show respect where respect is due, regardless of whether they got it right or wrong at the time. Sometimes their job of controlling the group as a whole, leads them to make unfair judgments in the heat of the moment toward that goal of maintaining order and calm. You'll see that in life, things often go the same way, and you serve yourself better if you don't swing out of control whenever you feel you've been treated unfairly. Stay chill and you won't make a bad situation worse.

Change, My Thoughts

Tomorrow is Valentine's Day. Good thing I don't have a dude on the outs 'cause then I'd have to be sad.

Anyway, I want to change my life. I know I need to because running from group homes obviously only lands me back here in the hall. And drugs will land my back here in the hall. And drugs will only destroy me.

I know these things, but I hear all these stories about people turning their lives around when they hit 25, 30. That makes sense to me, because I'm so not ready to stop. But that's probably because I was in rehab. But once that went bad and I was sent to a group home where we went to a school with normal people... it's hard to want to change.

Hearing their stories of parties and what not... and how being clean and sober at 16 is like uncool and lame. Not that I care but the group of kids I find myself attracted are the partiers, the drug users...just something about the lifestyle appeals me. But then I think and I know I can't just use one more time there is no such thing... 'cause one more time you're hooked again. The cycle continues.

So I would rather change my life. Ya, I do. I want to stop hurting my mom and dad and sister and all the people that care about me more then anything. But it's so much harder then it sounds. It's not like I can just stop. Man if ONLY it was that easy...if only.

This topic is making me mad...it stresses me out.

-Roe Ya Boat, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We don't know how severe your problem is. Obviously it's bad enough so that you can't control getting caught and you've been locked up so many times that you're getting sent to group homes. Now, we don't want to condone drug and alcohol abuse — but there is a difference between use and abuse. Ask yourself if you have to get obliterated every time you drink or use? Is it possible to just have get a little tipsy or a little high so that you didn't lose control and make stupid mistakes. How about staying away from the hard stuff and sticking to the softer stuff? That would mean no hard alcohol, but maybe a beer, no ecstasy but maybe just a little weed. We're not encouraging you to use, but if you really won't stop, why not try to take it down a notch? You might actually realize you like that better.

Listen To This True Story

listen and try not to deny the words that i speak
 for my truth is powerful enough to make you weep
 let me tell you a story about a girl
 trying to find her place in this cruel world
 at the age of six she never told a lie
 turned fourteen and wanted to commit suicide
 because her daddy beats and rapes her
 tells her mom but not even she believes her
 then to get the hurtful thoughts out of her head
 she starts to smoking crack underneath her bed
 just to take her mind from the anger that has lead
 to the seventeen-year-young lady she now is
 and at this age her brain is gone from all the thizz
 thinking 'bout her mother while repeating what she did
 she needed money for her drugs, that's a fact
 so the dope-fien' chick put herself on "the track"
 so she can get high and have just enough for her to get by
 she was a "hoe" that used no gloves
 jumping on dicks for money, not giving a what
 soon her stomach start' to get bigger a whole lot
 she still not giving a what and continue to smoke
 but at this point she at the hospital giving birth
 this woman made a crack baby — what's her worth
 the ex-hoe now has a boyfriend that moves in for good
 and she'd be home raising her baby if she could
 but her seven-year-old baby girl is now on drugs
 while her mom just stays smoking out in the 'hood
 then one day she come to her mom with tears in her eyes
 she say that mama's boyfriend raped her and its not a lie
 her mama slap her ass and start fitting
 say "girl you better stop your bullshitting"

-Anonymous, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Yes it's a poem that has us weeping — and angry and frustrated that it just keeps on keeping to happen this way. Generation after generation in the same situation from the eighties till this very day. Who should we get mad at? The man who rapes — or the mother who denies so the daughter can't escape growing up to be the next victim to the street after being prepared at her stepfather's feet? Yet the sons who get raised the same way become the disrespectful men that rape or put a dope-fiend girl on the track for their pay! It all started when the jobs left Oakland, and the Latin American drug lords had a notion they'd found a labor pool to spread their poison — all those unemployed sons and desperate fathers living with no jobs in the ghetto since then. A few did make a fortune which they didn't keep, and life became cheaper than cheap on the ghetto street with the pimping and drugging and killing. And now the fed's make their pay, putting dope dealers away without the worries of pre-crack revolutionary Panther days. And the Cinderella story you tell here, has no fairy-tale ending near and no Prince Charming — just more harming by folks cut off from hope, still trying to make money by selling dope as the prisons grow so fat they're ready to burst, and everything's going from bad to worse! Why can't we all just get along? 'Cause the weak get preyed upon by the weak and the strong. It's going to take an investment of people that care to end a sick cycle that spirals nowhere but endless rapes, murders, prisons — all this needless pain! Invest in moms not bombs, to be the land of the free again!

Infected

I'm infected with evil
 Runnin' through my veins
 Seeing visions of blastin' away some brains
 Makin' enemies walk with canes
 Threw away my life
 Right down the drain
 I'm infected with a power
 That will not cease
 Evil always prevails,
 Goodness always decreases
 This ain't no beauty pageant
 I don't promote world peace
 Actually, the evil doesn't
 Always puttin' the good up for lease
 I'm infected with an urge,
 A power to fight,
 But not for the good
 Bump making it right
 I ain't correct
 Seems so out of sight
 Total darkness, emptiness, and livin' without light
 I'm infected with an unstoppable disease
 Makin' my fam. hurt,
 Mom sayin' to stop
 Beggin' me, please
 Can't shake it off
 Scratch it off like some fleas
 Stings multiple times
 Like a wasp
 Not some bees
 I'm infected with a power to overcome,
 So this infection has to hide and run
 As long as I'm under this sun,
 I'll stand on top as number one.

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What do you think the antidote is for this disease? Big Vic, you're taking us on a roller coaster ride. We don't understand; one week, you write pieces talking about changing yourself, the next week, like this week, you contribute pieces that talk about "bump change." What is it going to be? No one ever said changing was going to be easy. In fact, reaching one's goals have never been easy unless your goals are simple like "breathing." When times get rough, it is simply a test to see whether or not you're fully committed, mind, body, and soul, to what you intend on completing. It is easier to give up than to fight on. What you write is a reflection of what you're thinking at that moment. However, remember: You're writing about NON-FICTION because this is your life and not Pinocchio's. This was a great piece (as usual) but the message is discouraging.

the police didn't even apologize. They just left as suddenly as they came

I Felt Abused and Misused

It was last year when I was kickin' it with my friends, and after they left I was by myself. That's when police came by: they stopped in front of me, came out, and ran towards me and yelling: "Don't move!"

I got up and started to run, but they grabbed me and slammed me to the ground. The police searched me, searched my backpack, but found nothing they were looking for. So, they just let me go. They said I was the wrong person.

But the police didn't even apologize. They just left as suddenly as they came, and I was mad! They had slammed me to the ground and searched me for no good reason, just

because I looked like someone the police was looking for.

I wanted to yell at them! I wanted to beat them up! 'Cause all I really wanted them to do was to say, "I'm sorry."

-Victor, 150 Crew

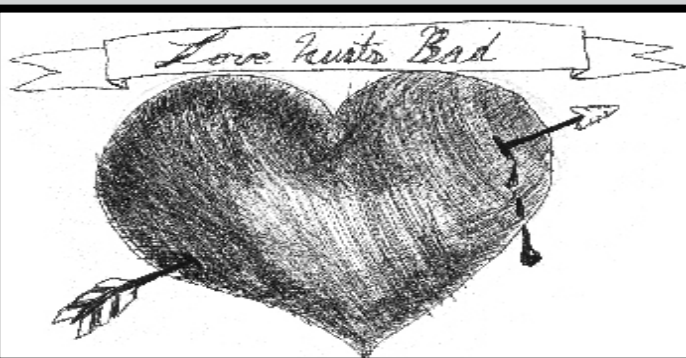
From The Beat: Thanks for a terrific piece. Yeah, how can the police expect respect when they don't offer any? On the other hand, once you run, you're identifying yourself as a potential suspect. If you had stood your ground, offered no resistance, and cooperated, perhaps you might have been treated differently. They probably figured, before and after, that if you had nothing to hide, you would have followed their order: "Don't run!" Yet we must admit we've read stories where a cooperative street youth still gets slammed to the ground and treated disrespectfully; still, with so many guns on the street, we can't help but ask: Isn't that what you'd do if you were the police? We completely understand your anger, however, when finding no weapon (nor any other incriminating evidence) they did not apologize for their rough treatment — while perhaps asking as well for an explanation of why you ran away.

Hear Me Out

i remember a time when i was hungry
and just couldn't wait
i stood next to my mom
next to the stove with a fork and a plate
i was pissed off
my stomach aching
yeah it was growling
then my mom looked at me
with a squinched-up face
and said she heard i was willing
i gave her that face
then she put her left hand on her waist
just when i was 'bout to say something
i got slapped in the face
i said "ma i can explain
if you just take the time to listen"
she got that "boy stop talking
open your ears and pay attention"
the words come out of her mouth
i heard "you and cousin reggy ass out"
all i could do is put my head down
and jump on the couch.
i said "ma i ain't do nothing"
more words came out of her mouth
all of sudden i got up
and walked straight out the house.
i was pissed off but at the same time
thinking i was way to clever fo' this bee
all of a sudden the mothafunkin' feds
start — damn — chasing me

-No Name, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is far too fine a piece of writing not to have an author's name on the credit line! If you want anonymity, make up a name that only you will recognize as you. Then the rest of us will have a clue how to find your next poem or piece in The Beat. So many of us will like this one so much, we'll be looking for a repeat of this writer's talented touch. We particularly appreciate the irony with which your words are laced, thinking your so smart — then end up getting chased! You don't say it but you make us aware it's true that your momma knew what was best for you, and if you really had played it smart you'd still be at home eating her food. Good poem!



Time Is All About Family

Time is very important in my life, because I live in a bad neighborhood. The way they get down is all about how much time they got to do something. For me, time is all about family, my girlfriend, my little brothers and school.

Money is something that I need to get, but it take time to get it, and money also make me happy. And, for some people, it make them crazy, but money goes around a lot. But for me, I need to learn I to save money.

-Jb Money U5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: By acknowledging that time is about family and loved ones, you are telling us that you know what to value in your life. Learning to save money is a good thing too, but it is something that you can learn as you earn. Family is the true treasure, as you have already found out. Maybe it's time to change your name from JB Money to JB Family...

What It's Like To Be Locked Up

I would tell my little brother what it would be like if he were here in juvenile. It would be very hard to think about what you are doing here and what you are going to do when you get out.

Well, to me it's no joke. You have to do everything they say to do. They will have everyone on lock down for something that you didn't do... and the stupid things people do to be the baddest in juvie. They'll do anything if they are in a bad mood. If they don't like you or they don't like where you are from. Like me, I'm from San Francisco, but I'm Chicano. They will talk a lot of shhh, just make you want to beat the shhh out of them so they won't talk anymore.

So my advice to you is stay in school and don't do anything stupid so you can end up in this lousy place like me. Listen to what your parents tell you. Don't be a follower, be a leader.

-Lil' Speedy U3, SF/YGC

From the Beat: You give excellent advice, but are you planning to take it yourself? You've now experienced how bad it is to give away your freedom, so have you made a plan for how you're going to keep it the next time you have it? For example, can you see that smashing on someone for "talking a lot of shhh" is just a way to give up your own power and put yourself at the mercy of others? Laughing at or walking away from a lot of shhh talk not only can disarm the one who was talking, it can make you realize just how strong you are.

They will have everyone on lock down for something that you didn't do... and the stupid things people do to be the baddest in juvie.

Miles From Home

As I walked along the narrow road of loneliness

I saw a vulture soaring.

I was ablaze in the sunlight, yet cold as ice.

The wind carried me like a feather

and dropped me like dice

on the hard surface of life.

I prayed for fortune and fame.

All I ever got was blame.

I'm miles from home

for a cause with no name.

-Joseph, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Fabulous, Joseph. There must be more where this one came from, and we'd like to see them. Terrific writing.

Explaining It to My Lil' Cousin

i would tell my lil' cousin

don't come to juvenile hall

i would tell him it is no joke

i would tell him you are separated

from your whole family

i would tell him everybody you know

will look at you differently

i would tell him you will feel violated

i would tell him you will make friends

and you'll make enemies

i would tell him the food is cold

and the clothes you wear are old

i would tell him the beds ain't comfortable

i would tell him the rooms are small

i would tell him just don't do anything stupid

to get yourself locked up in the hall

-Victor, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Well, you did just tell him, if he reads this piece, and you've told every other reader of The Beat! This is no place to be: "[You] will feel violated" and lonely and uncomfortable and stigmatized.

Life!

What is life?

Have you ever thought about it?

Have you ever thought about the life you're leading yourself into?

Let life catch up to you, not you catch up to life.

Life is an obstacle, no matter if you think you are taking the easy way out.

The easy way out is the difficult way out of things.

You think you can just glide right through life, without hitting no bumps and dips.

Well, you can jump in and out of things

But you just might get stuck trying to jump in and out of things.

Sometimes I don't even know the word "easy"

Because I don't have no more drinks to make shhh easy.

I thought that life was just a big old joke

Well, me thinking life is a joke, now I am a joke.

I tried jumping in and out of things

And, look, I got stuck for life

Because I made a life, my baby girl's life.

I was always told that there is a life to go, and a life to come.

I've thought a lot about life, and now I know where I messed up

And now it's time for an opportunity to do right in my life

And my baby's life.

-Pomo Indian, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: There is much in this piece that we admire, particularly the acknowledgment of where you messed up and how you have to fix it for yourself and for your daughter. But where you are wrong is when you say, "Now I am a joke." No, you are far from a joke. You are a serious young woman who understands her responsibility to her child. You thought you could make the rough spots easier by resorting to alcohol, and you've learned the really valuable lesson that alcohol can make any problem worse. You've learned that life is not a joke, and that you only have this one to live. Those two lessons are so important, that you are way ahead of where you were before you sat down and gave the serious thought that your life deserves. You are on a new path, and if you take it one step at a time, we think you will be looking back on this period of your life from an entirely new and more solid vantage point in the not-too-distant future. Just keep moving forward.

Getting Played

My PO and the probation department are trying to send me to a group home. I feel like they're trying to play me. The heavy in my case got to go home, and I'm still here. If they let me go home, I'm going to help my community and be with my family. I think god wanted me to be in here to learn my lesson, and show how much my family loves me.

My mom is fighting for me to the end. Even if they send me to a group home, my mom is going to fight. I been here since December 11 and today is January 23. I'm still here. I'm learning that being locked up ain't cool, and the way that the system is set up is designed for you to go in and out. I'm wanting to cut through it and stay out, go to college and major in history. I got a plan to do what I want to do in my life out the system, but they won't give me a chance.

-Dexter U3, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is a fine piece, Dexter. But we're not sure why you think going to a group home is playing you. Don't you think you can learn more about how to make your plan a reality by gaining even more experience? You're maturing fast, and your brain is working well. Don't let a little setback keep you from continuing on the truly excellent path you've set for yourself. What particular era in history interests you? What books are you reading to further your understanding of history? Don't wait to act on your plan. Keep writing, keep teaching and keep moving forward!

One Individual, One Choice

I wish my mom was that supportive, confident person I never had. I wish she would set up parties, have fun and worry about nothing. I wish she could be that person I can talk to and do something special with. But she's not. That's ok. It's not her fault I'm this way.

Now I came to realize that I make my choices and I lead my life. Many kids haven't gotten to that stage of thinking and realizing that the only person that can change you is you. In order to realize these things you have to get a new perspective of life. You need to see life from a different point of view for once. Remember, it's your life, make something out of it.

-Alex U3, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We don't think blaming yourself or your mother for the way you act is very useful, Alex. We admire you for not holding your mother at fault, even though she didn't give you what a mother should give a child. We know that she, too, had to grow up in a certain way, probably without the supports from her parents that you also didn't get. But in the end, it doesn't matter whose "fault" it is, only that you will bear the responsibility for your choices, and that means you will live with the consequences. It's very clear that you've already figured this out for yourself, and that shows both strength of character and a brain that works, and works well. What let you see life from a different point of view? Whatever the answer to that, not everybody can count on the strengths you possess, so in a way, you're lucky. So, how will you use these gifts to build the life you want to make something of? What do you want to make of your life, and what's your plan for getting there from here?

Getting Shot

It was a Saturday night! It looked like a good night to go out and party with my lil' brother! So my lil' brother started to call some of his friends to what's cracking fo' the night! Then after 15 minutes trying to get into some, one of his friends had a "sweet 15 party."

We started getting ready, looking all clean and fresh! We told our mom, "We leaving mom." My brother went up to her and said, "Let me get some money." Then my mom said, "Look, I don't want you two to go out because I got a bad feeling!"

"No," my brother said, "everything is going to be cool!" Then he gave her a kiss! And I did the same thing, too. And we left to party! We never thought that that was my brother's almost last kiss!

Me and my lil' brother and some other friends we're going to the party drinking alcohol and looking for some fun and girls! We all got to the party and a lot of girls were in the party, not even going to lie! Then we saw some guys that we had funk with! We weren't really tripping off them. We were going for girls and party not for funk, because I had my lil' brother with me and I really didn't want to do something stupid in front of him!

Then after the party, me, my brother, and some other friends were coming out when some people that we didn't know started to talk shhh to us. So we just started to fight. and next I saw hella fools start running to us and start to jump us. I was on the floor, and next thing I heard, someone shooting my lil' brother. I was all messed up. I got up, my face bleeding, and just went where my bro' was and just started to cry because I thought that he was going to die!

I was hella mad! Hella bad stuff was crossing my mind!

-Marco U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is a very scary story to read because it shows how one moment of joy and fun can so quickly turn to horror and tragedy. We can imagine some of that "bad stuff" that was crossing your mind when you thought your brother was going to die. But now that you have both survived this near-death experience, have you thought about all those things that could have happened? Have you really considered how close you were to losing a brother, and that whether you took your revenge or not, you would still never have that brother again? Have you thought about your dear mother, and the almost last kiss she got (and it could have been the end for both of you). What do you think she would want, revenge or a living son? What you went through was terrible, but you could make it even more terrible for those that you love by trying to get even in a way that could end with you losing your own life, either to the grave or to the prison system. Think long and hard about your mother, and what she wants for you. Can you give it to her?

Change

Try to be different,
But I maintain
Want some change,
But I stay the same
Still act foolish at times
It's just so lame
Wanted it all
The fortune, the fame
I wouldn't change it all completely
Now, never
'Cause I got past experiences that make me clever
Maybe keep 90%
And the other to change
'Cause I'm 90% coo',
But 10% strange
Just get rid of the things
That messed me up
All those excuses I make
"If's," "when's," or "but's"
But it's so hard
Because I'm accustomed to me
That full 100% makes me the real V-I-C
I'll change for the fame
The people who show love,
Change
'Cause I want to please the Lord above,
But my pride and soul will never let me go
Just putting up a front,
Playin' in a show
Change will come with time or death,
So I'll take the right way for once,
Instead of left.

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's very difficult to change overnight and breaking old habits is hard to do. If you truly want to change, it has to be a one-way ticket and once you start, don't look back. You can't decide to do good one day and revert to your old ways the next, even if that means leaving your old friends behind. Although there will always be those who will try to whisper in your ear and bring out the bad in you, keep in mind that the only person who will benefit from you changing your ways is you and no one else. It's a hard road but in the end it's so worth it. Remember big change comes in time, but to start making a difference happens immediately. It starts with your thinking!

Changing My Life

Yes, I would rather change my life than what I'm living because it's not what I really want for myself. I want something better, but I don't know what's really holding me back. If it is the money, the dope, cars, or the females around. But what I have to say, it does add up to the time that is or was getting wasted.

So hopefully I can change my life before it's too late. It's not worth being locked up, or being six feet under. Because nothing would ever be worth your life, or another person life. Like I say, never wish anybody jail time, or death. If one life can change another one, then I'm all in for change.

One love, I'm out. Peace and love to all out there in the struggle. Hang in there, we can do anything we put our mind into.

-Christian U2, SF

From The Beat: Whatever is holding you back — and you've identified the prime suspects — it surely isn't worth what you're getting now, or worse that could come. To get what you want, you sometimes have to go outside the box. That box may be the neighborhood you've become so accustomed to, your own family, your peers, or your own thinking. By wanting to change, you have already begun to do it. The question is, will you continue when you get out of here? We know you can, but only you know if you will.

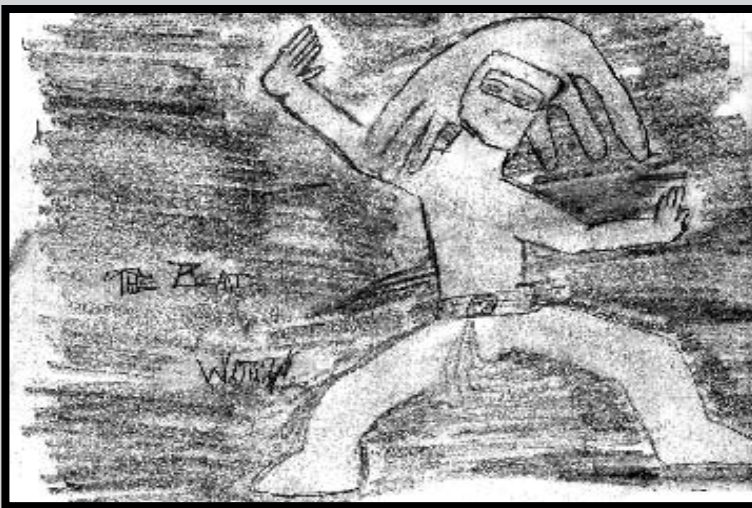
Money Vs. Time

For me, time is much more important than money. Money is something that comes and goes. Money is a man-made creation that's printed every day.

Time cannot be made by man, only God. Time is one thing, that in every way, a person cannot get back. Time passes every day, time that you cannot get back. Money you're gonna get again. There's always another job or another hustle.

-Paradise U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You expressed what we believe exactly. When there's a hole in your pocket, you can always fill it with more money, one way or another. But when there's a hole in your heart where a loved one once was, nothing will ever fill it again!



Change

I'm going to change when I get out of here because I want to prove to myself that I can get out of my neighborhood and live a more positive life. The way I am going to change is by listening more and think twice before I act.

I also, instead of going outside all the time, start to study more for school because now I am thinking that school is money and school is like a job that can get you a better job instead of a minimum wage job.

-Kwes U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: By declaring that you're going to change, and spelling out the changes you're going to make, you've already changed! And if you follow through on the promises you make to yourself, those changes will open doors to even greater changes. Yes, Kwes, going to school is like a key that opens all kinds of doors, not just the ones that lead to good paying jobs, but doors of understanding and experience that can only make you a better person. We wish you all the luck in the world.

Missing Dad

When I heard my dad was dead I was so mad to where I was not talking to no one and I had so much hate in the person who killed him and I locked myself in the room I was so sad. I had to take some therapy and I was so sad to where I heard that he had died and I felt like a part of me had died too and I felt miserable and I was only mad because my dad was only like my first best friend and the only person that I had really talked to. So it only made things a little harder for me but I got through it.

-Son, 150 Crew

From the Beat: We're sure that your father's death still affects you today, and think that probably when you felt like a part of you had died it was something real you were feeling—something in you was most likely changed forever. Losing a close family member is something that we don't learn to deal with usually until we're much older, and it's okay that you felt so much anger and it's okay if you still feel angry, though we're pretty sure that you probably have a whole lot of different feelings about it now. We encourage you to get some counseling and share your feelings, whatever they may be, with someone who can help you work through them. And definitely keep writing it down.

"Do I Look Good?"

The most unforgettable character I ever met was this girl that I liked.

She was pretty, thick, light-skinned, and smart. I met her at school. When I saw her I said to myself "I gotta have her." She was in my last period class, and I stared at her the whole time we were in class. People were trying to talk to me but I wasn't trying to hear nothing they said. I had my attention on her but I wasn't table to man and just go talk to her.

A week wasn't passed and I finally said something to her but it was something stupid. I said "Do you need help with your work?" That was the only thing I could think of and to my surprise she smiled and said "Yes I do."

But I couldn't help her because I needed some help myself. So I had to think of something quick, so I said maybe I'll just help you with your homework, so she said OK and that was that. Then after school she said are you still going to help me with my homework, and she said "OK" and that was that. Then after school she said, "Are you still going to help me with my homework?" and I said "Yeah, but first I have something to do."

So she said "I'll give you my number and call me when you're ready." I said OK and took her number.

I called her when I was done handling some business, and she said I could come over and we could study at her house.

I went to her house but I was nervous about coming in because I thought her parents might come home while we are in her room. But I came in anyway we went to her room, all she had on was a bra and some pajamas. She was looking so good and I started to get an erection, so I sat down so she wouldn't see.

She asked me what I was doing. I said "nothing" with a look of guiltiness on my face.

"I know you are lying," she said.

And I said why do you say that? But she didn't respond so then I said I thought we are supposed to be studying, but she changed the subject and said "do you think I'm pretty?"

I said "you look OK,"

Then she took her bra off and said "what about now?"

I couldn't even speak, I was just looking with my mouth wide open.

Then she asked me again, "what do you think."

I finally said "that's nice," but from the look on her face, she didn't want that answer, then she put her bra back on and sat back on her bed.

I was still in shock because she really just showed me her breasts and she didn't even know me, but that was that and we went back to doing my work.

It got late, and I said "I think it's time for me to go,"

She said "why do you want to leave me?" but I didn't care.

I had to go make my money, so before I left her house, she gave me a kiss and said, "I'll see you later."

I said, "OK," and walked off, went back to the block and waited for this day to be over.

Later that night she called me and said, "I have a surprise for you tomorrow."

I said, "OK I'll talk to you tomorrow," and hung up the phone. (To be continued.)

-Travelle, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We can't wait for the next installment of this saga. As a writer, you do such a good job of capturing how confusing it is when you first meet someone you like. It sounds like this girl had WAS unforgettable - very bold, and with her own idea of how things should be. We're so curious about what happens next: Is it love, or is it lust? Why is she so forward? Do you end up doing any studying at all? We'll be tuning in next week for the conclusion.

RIP Arturo

What's up Beat, I'm writin' this a month ahead of time so this will come out around March 12th because one of my close homies, Arturo Romero (April 10, 1989-March 12, 2006). I know when he died a lot of people's lives changed for the worst. Arturo was always there when you needed someone to ride with you. The first homie to get down. He was only 16 when he died, and he had a whole life to live. Now he's in the sky, watchin' over everyone else while they live their lives.

This March 12 is one year my homie has been gone physically, but he will always stay with us mentally, and in our hearts.

So I want everyone out there who read this to take a moment to remember Arturo Romero. His spirit will always be with us. RIP Arturo "Lil' Turo" Romero. (April 10, 1989-March 12, 2006)

-Dreamer, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your love and respect for Lil' Turo is so moving ... you've been writing about him and honoring him for as long as we've known you, and we can see how much you care about him even in death. You'll notice we took out one line in this piece where you wrote that you wanted the homies to remember Arturo Romero. But the death of a 16 year old boy whose loss has effected so many people is something we should all mourn: North, South, black, brown, white, young, old, everyone. His spirit knows no color and no turf.

Change Life? Or Keep It the Same?

sometime i do want a better life
that's why every night
i got to my knees and pray to jesus christ
asking him why
i had to be the one to get two strikes
now i have to live my life right
no more running around getting high all night
now i got to sit back and watch other people waste
their life
i wish i would have thought twice
before i tried to take that man's life
now i'm going to be the one going to the pin for the rest
of my life
hiding from that big buff girl who want me to be her
wife
and i'm go' have to kill this bee before i become a dyke
because i know that just ain't right
i remember watching my auntie suck on that glass pipe
thinking to myself "i know i have to have a better life"
so i started selling white
'cause it was around me all my life
i used to be on the spot posted with my potnas all night
'till officer minyet rode up on me on a bike
and took my ash to jail that same time
now i can't keep on doing what's not right
because i know i can live a better life

-Aleshia, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is the girl, or should we say young lady, who knows that her ways of living shady have had their day, 'cause when she goes free she needs to go free to stay. But then you seem to think you're still going end up in the Pen' having to defend yourself against some real tough grown-up women. And you know you don't want that. That part about your auntie on a pipe that had you out selling white seemed back then like a plan that might come out all right — but now you know that selling that snow can mess you up just as much as smoking it. So you say you need to quit. Bravo! Hurrah! We know you have the tools, but then the next week you're pandering to fools trying to prove just how down you were. Girl, you don't need to prove you understand the street — you need to prove you can find another way to eat that won't have you in that cell worried about being the next woman's meat. You need to find some joy on the positive side if you hope to maintain, 'cause fear's a way to motivate yourself to start a change but we all have a habit of forgetting the pain when we crave fly-high, feel-good life again that'll have the BGs spreading your fame. It really is a losing game if you imagine all the fun stays in the fast lane. It might sound square but find some simple pleasures you can share — and when you're released, stay out there!

My Life

Today I went to court. Thinking about what's going to happen with my life. Unfortunately, things never go the way I want them to go.

I am facing a possible life sentence. I truly don't know what's going to happen, but I am preparing myself for the worst.

I have a daughter, and that hurts me the worst. Thinking about her makes me want to cry.

Don't get me wrong. It's not from fear. It's from love, a kind of love for someone really special. But thinking that I might never get out... it's no fun when the rabbit's got the gun.

So for all you youngsters out there – think about your life. Because I don't really care if you come in here or not. To me it makes no difference. As a matter of fact, you can keep me company in here.

-Uriel, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Right. We know what you're saying. We hope the youngsters do, too. And we don't want you to give up hope.

My Faith in Jail

Bright lights flashin' deep into earth
behind evil walls where there's no love

I seen what people say is worst
Thought love supposed to come first?

Dark empty nights were voices touchin' you deep
Too many nightmares so I can't sleep
Finally all the way across state
Livin' inside a jail I truly hate

Pray to the Father that's with me to the end
Inside jail it's every man for themselves, you don't got friends

Open eyes and deep soul faith to make a change
They call you by a number 'cause you ain't got no name.

Hurt deep to see the looks on people's face
They ride or die but forever somebody ace
Me I'ma pray and stand with the father of free.
That's my right hand man, free is what I want to see.

Pictures and letters keepin' my faith strong
Pray to get out so shall never do wrong
Both hands high to sky
This time I get out I'll do right so don't ask me why?

-Lil' Papa, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This could be an anthem for anyone that's ever faced time, or ever felt the profound isolation and loneliness of being behind a locked door. The system may try to give a man a number, but your poem inspires us to believe that a man can hold onto his name, just by holding onto his pride: Both hands to the sky.

RIP - In Loving Memory Of

A few were old and had lived life to the fullest.
While some of you were young and hadn't seen what life had offer. A couple had an awful illness,
though most of you fell victim to the streets and a few of you were just at the wrong place and the wrong time.
But each and every one of you added a smile to my world at one time or another
for some its only been months since you left,
other it's been years and for some it been decades.
I think of each of you often and you maybe gone
but surely you're not forgotten. Shine on.

-Girly, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What a beautiful tribute to the loved ones you've lost. Yet how unfair that you have lost so many in your young life.

It Was Her, Part One

Two years ago, we met, but it wasn't until a year later that I knew her. Chilling at the Gay-Straight Alliance with my Goth friend, a drama geek, I knew I was draggin' her in. We all began chatting, ignoring the speaker, when she turned to me and the geek.

I told her: She was beaming with a glow of pure bliss, and as she stared steadily into my eyes, the words stumbled from my lips, asking what was going on.

"I'm bi-," she said softly. Her mouth held a small smirk even though I cracked my jokes about welcoming her to the club. If I seemed to speak easily, inside I could not think. In that moment, I believe I fell for her and following that day were some of the best days I have ever experienced.

Yet the bliss with such a beauty, did not last: a drunken night, my best friend's boyfriend, and no memory. So they all believed the lies, and even when I turned to her — she believed him! So she turned away from me even as I fell to my knees and cried out her name. She did not falter in her steps. Days, weeks ... endless time went by: I only woke to walk aimlessly through my life, with a broken heart and a fervent mind. I'd see her day after day with cold hate in her eyes. No one believed what he and I knew!

Then one sweet spring day, everything seemed to change. I could feel her eyes on me as I tried hard to return her gaze but abashed, sweat on my brow, I could not face her icy rage. Yet, when she finally called out my name and asked me to talk with her, I followed her like a love-sick puppy. "I believe you."

Her voice was soft and careful, as if speaking to an abused child. And for a moment, as we talked, I saw through her practiced façade. I saw her care, her pain, her truth — and her lies. As quickly as it came, it faded, her walls quickly rebuilt after a sickeningly sweet embrace. It was in that moment, sweat-ridden, in a balmy hallway, it was then I knew I loved her.

Summer came, and I had hopes for next year, so many plans for the future. It was in those hot summer days, I tried to better myself, to become what she wanted — how wrong I was, thinking those pitiful things.

-Esoteric Rainbow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We've already told you what a gifted story-teller you are. In this piece, we feel your sudden infatuation which blossomed into, as you say, some of the best days of your life. Then the betrayal, which remains appropriately vague, unspoken, inarticulate — a night of drunkenness so extreme that memory is like a quickly forgotten dream. And his lie, his boast, turned a host of friends into accomplices in the sudden death by frost of the delicate blossom of your nascent love. Then with the coming of Spring, you experience a false spring, or so you imply at the end of Part One. We eagerly await Part Two for the quality of your story-telling, though we fear the worst for our earnest and sincere (for all her drunken rebelliousness) young heroine. Write more stories — about anything and everything. Write what you know: your mind and your heart in a world that makes you feel "strange".

Her voice was soft and careful, as if speaking to an abused child. And for a moment, as we talked, I saw through her practiced façade. I saw her care, her pain, her truth — and her lies.

My Time With Dirty Money

I needed the time to get my money, so I had to leave my mom's house to do that.

I left, took some clothes, saved money and had my boyfriend's uncle rent me a room.

I was working as a prostitute, getting money for me to eat and survive and then my boyfriend, always called me on my cell phone talking 'bout he needed some money and I would bring him some. After that he always wanted to get lovey-dovey with me and when I wasn't bringing him money he wanted to get mad and all he was using it on was some weed and sniffing coke. So I felt why should I be giving him money for this?

We got into an argument, then he told me he already had somebody giving him money, so I left him.

Then my other boyfriend was doing bad so after I got done with my clients I would take a shower and go to his house and I gave his mom \$50 and I gave him \$30. He didn't do nothing but spend it on weed and on drinks and he was using me for sex, so I slapped him and then I apologized and gave him money.

I got yelled at by a couple of tricks on their street. I had nobody to look after me. I was doing it all by self then. I never let the love of my life know what I do.

-Shelina, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's a very dangerous game you're playing on many levels. If you are taking men back to a private room where no one is looking out for you, you could get very hurt. Also, what you are doing is causing emotional damage you may not even be aware of. We don't know why you had to leave home an start turning tricks, but if it's something you think you might want to get out of and don't know how, there is an organization in Alameda that helps girls like you. You're in a good position to get hooked up with this organization since you don't have a pimp that is trying to keep you hoeing. There is a hotline number and the people there can help you find housing, get on track to get your high school diploma and help you find a job. The number is 1-888-MISSEY. Call them, it can't hurt.

I Choose Money

Out of time and money I would choose money, because all I got is time and there's not enough money in the world to get your time back. Money is what make the world go round, and time can be ended by one fatal incident. One bullet can end any person time, but there's enough money in the world to help that person's family with his or her funeral.

Death was not my topic, but it was an example of money is what's needed. Family needs money when the moneymaker has run out of time. Money and time can go both ways, because it takes time to make money. Every person's time will be stopped but while your time is still running you should be doing whatever is right to make some money.

-Nick Beam U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We're not sure we agree with your conclusions, but we admire the way you reasoned it out and explained your thinking. Still, we have to wonder about what you'll be thinking when your time is about to run out. Will you be asking for money then, too? Of course, money can help those who continue to live. But money can never take the place of a human life, can never fill the hole that every death creates in the hearts of the loved ones left behind. Money can always refill and empty pocket, but nothing can refill the emptiness of a loved one's passing.

Change

Yes, I would like to change the things I have done in the past. But I can't. All I can do is change my future and become somebody and do something with my life, and stop wasting time on waiting for change and make one.

-Moo Moo U5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Moo Moo, the thing that would elevate this piece from a Co to a POW is the details of what those changes you plan to make in your life will look like, and how you're going to go about making them.

Sad Story: Son Shot His Mother's Boyfriend

Weather: (whispering) Man, those rivals shot my cousin.

Homie: Don't worry, man. I know who shot your cousin. His name is [—] and he's runnin' for [—]. Here's a gun. Stay strong, brother.

Weather: (crying) All right, man. Where he run at?

Homie: He run in a store. His folks work there and live in the store.

— Late at night —

Weather walk' up and talk to the clerk: Where's he at?

Clerk: He's at the back.

Weather walk' right to the back, pull' out his gun: Yo! You the one kill my cousin! Man, you goin' die tonight!

Killer: Whoa! Hold up! I got kids! And my wife' here!

Weather accidentally shoots at clerk, and then run' home: (sighing) What up, brah? Where's Mom? ... Oh, hey Mom!

Brah: I'm sorry about your cousin today.

Mother: No, don't talk about ...

Weather: Shut up! It's cool. Hey what happen' to your face?

Man, you let your boyfriend hit you! Every time you bring a man, you let the men hit you!

Boyfriend: Hey! Shut up, boy! Sit your ass down! I'm busy with your mother.

Weather: Ninja! You ain't tell me to do shit! You hit the hell out of my mother! She my goddamn mom! What the hell's wrong with you, fool?

Boyfriend: Boy, you better listen to what I told you.

Weather: Funk you, man! Get the funk out of my house!

— Boyfriend tries to hurt Weather and Mother tries to stop him, but the boyfriend pushes her away. Then Weather falls against the couch and pulls out the gun! —

Boyfriend: Boy, you must be trippin'! Are you goin' shoot me? Go ahead! Do it, little bitch!

— The boyfriend moves toward Weather who shoots him three times. The boyfriend dies. —

Mother: No-o-o-o-o! No! Not now (crying). No, not my boyfriend!

Weather's crying, too, beside his brother who saw everything; his mother lies on her boyfriend's body, resting his head on her arm: No!

— You see, it's real life. And in real life, Weather's mother went over to her boyfriend and not her son, because he shot him dead. But in real life, Weather's mother needed a man who would treat her right, not abusive men like the dead man in her arms.

-Dizzy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Violence leads to violence. Killing leads to killing. Abuse leads to hate, and in a world of killing, hate leads to violent death — and a lifetime in prison for a young man whose heart was broken first by the death of his friend and then by abuse and disrespect at the hands of his mother's boyfriend. There is only one way out of this tragic whirlpool of violence devouring the lives of young black men at a rate that sees one in four going to jail and far too many dying young in a subculture where "killa" is a word of pride! We won't pretend that part of the blame belongs to the voters and taxpayers of the wealthiest and most powerful nation on earth. Yet neither will we pretend that economic oppression, endemic despair or even growing up in an underground economy where drug sales and a black market of stolen goods represents a tempting avenue of financial advancement to many who see no other way — justifies killing. It's an old phrase, so old that it uses the word "sword", but it's no less true in an age when guns flood the streets of inner city America (and cities around the world) — to paraphrase: Those who live by the gun, die by the gun. Thank you, Dizzy, for a powerful and moving story of how a young man destroyed three lives, the two he killed and his own. Maybe we should include his friend, for every gang banger is as much to blame for his homies death by gunfire as is the one pulling the trigger — 'cause it's a zero-sum game! An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, was intended to limit evil (no mass murder retaliations) and yet it perpetuates the very evil it seeks to limit. As Gandhi once wrote, "If we all practice an eye for an eye, the world will go blind." Open your eyes — quit the gangster life before the next man dies, the next mother cries, and the next SHU locks a killer inside.

Family needs money when the
moneymaker has run out of time.

What It Do

What's up Beat? This ya boy S.O.G. This here is another message for the Lord. It says in the bible to, follow in the foot steps of the Lord and follow his commandments. Obey thy father and mother and they should live long. The land that your Father has made for them and that's earth. After earth there is a great prize and that is heaven, but you have to believe in your heart that God is the Lord, and he brought his only son Jesus Christ from the dead. That Jesus died for all of our sins. Some people believe that is a myth and make believe story, but I believe in my heart that there is a life after death.

Just remember my brothers and sisters that Jesus loves you and you should be thankful that he wakes you up every morning

Never forget to pray every night and in the morning thanking Jesus for waking you up, because tomorrow is not promised to nobody.

Treat everybody the way you want to be treated. Love one another the way Jesus loves you.

-Son Of God, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We appreciate you sharing your faith, beliefs and thoughts with us all. May the message you shared touch someone and lift their spirits.

How Would You Tell Someone Who Doesn't Know?

This place is boring and depressing. It's a different feeling on different days. One day you feel happy, thinking you're gonna get out one day. One day you think about your family and you get kinda sad. Another day you think, I've been in here too long. You get used to it and you be calm. I hope no one goes through what I go through, the people who have, I hope they learned from it and don't come back. I could say I am going through the same things as my older brother and sister.

When the door closes, sadly I can't do anything about it, it's a part of my life. It's cool sometimes when you are out of your room, especially rec.

-Tyrone, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We appreciate you taking the time to share your thoughts with us all. Sounds like you're doing a good job so far dealing with all those different emotions, on different days. Are your brother and sister also in the same situation that you're in? This must also make you sad. May this experience strengthen you, so you won't have to come back! And hopefully your brother and sister will see how strong you really are, and be moved by your words and actions. Thank you again.

How Would You Tell Someone Who Doesn't Know?

It's hard to be locked up because you are not with your family because you think about them everyday, so that makes it hard to be in here.

So, for the people, who are not in jail, stay out because the new Juvenile Hall is no joke because it's like a real jail. You don't get no more full plates of food. You get a little box of food. That's it. So, if you care, tell your kids to stay out of jail and get an education.

The worse part is being in your cell alone. All you do is stare at white walls. You feel like you're trapped, no one to talk to. The only thing you can do to take the stress off your mind is push-ups and sit-ups. I can't wait to go home, so peace out, Beat. God bless.

-Lil' Sam, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thank you very much for your words of advice, Lil' Sam. We hope everyone who comes across your piece takes heed. Before you found out for yourself, what did you used to think being locked up was like? Did what you used to think Juvy was like match the real thing? How or how not? If this is how you feel when you're locked up, the answer is simple: Stay the hell away from this place! We don't know why you got locked up, but we know this: There's nothing quite like having your freedom. Get yours back and hold on to it tight!

From Scratch

If I could start my life from scratch, my daddy wouldn't have died in '92, my brother wouldn't got shot with a punk .22, and my grandma, "Gaga," wouldn't die in a million years. My big cousin' "Way Out" would still be here.

Lil' Mezzzy was a soldier. He went out blatin', but the cold part 'bout it is, one of his ninjas accidentally gassed him. He wasn't supposed to die. He should still be here. What about Jamon? What about Ron'e? What about Lil' Meach?

My cousin' Marnique got 20 years and he was only 15. Man, this world is messed up by any and all means.

-Jesus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This world can be cruel at times. Bullets don't have any names. They touch whoever gets in the way. We're sorry to hear about all the losses you have experienced through the years. However, you are still alive. Don't you see for yourself that if you live by the sword, you die by the sword and if you do the crime, be prepared to do the time? What else needs to happen in your life in order for you to wake-up and quit with the drama?

I Love You

What's up with it, Beat Within? How you been? Me, the same, old Lil' Creeper, kickin' back in max., but shhh has changed for me. I'm out to a Group Home to Stockton for 6-9 months, but that ain't shhh, but you guys asked if saying "I love you" is a matter of words?

If you ask me, every gangsta needs a lady. Me, I got a fine little piece that I know that was meant to be 'cause I've been through some shhh, but if you ask me, when you say the words "I love you," you are suppose to mean it 'cause you really like that person, but when you hear those words, it's because you know that it doesn't matter what position you are in, they stick with you through the good and through the bad, so those words make a gangsta go soft, but everyone loves someone; everyone. Well, I'm going to end this with my love, respect, and loyal embracement. I'm out. Stay solid. To all doing time, remember: Stay true to this game.

-Lil' Creeper, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Like the saying goes: "Behind every strong man is a strong woman." In life, regardless of what comes out of your mouth, you shouldn't say it if you don't mean it. However, these three words, "I love you," get used so frequently that it sometimes loses its meaning. A lot of guys say this just to get inside of a girl's pants, therefore spoiling it for everyone because females think it's now just "sweet talk." You're right; everyone should have love for at least someone on this Earth, and if a person does not have love for someone, that person needs a hug. Are you going to do your program for your loved ones? We hope you and your "piece" stay together because a lot of relationships come to an end when one of the two parts goes to jail. Regardless of where you go, Lil' Creeper, keep in touch with your folks at The Beat Within!

Look Into Our Eyes

Look into our eyes
W'en I look into your eyes
I can tell
You seem surprised
W'en you look into my eyes
You can tell I seem surprised
W'en we look into each other's eyes
We both can tell we seem surprised
Just the way we look
Into each other's eyes
Baby, it's all right
Just take your time
We got all day and all night
Trust and believe
We got what we need
Just listen to our hearts
That's where it all starts

-Purplicitious, Marin

From The Beat: You have a romantic heart, one that you trust. Young love can be the most exciting and scary thing a young lady (and/or man) can experience. It's great that you have the courage to follow your heart.

Change

One time I tried to change my life, but I couldn't. Last time I got out of juvy I said I was going to stay home all day, and that I was going to get a job, and that I wasn't going to go back to the block with the homies, but I failed on the same day I got out.

I went to the homies and got high and drunk and that day I got into a fight. And now I'm in here again facing a long time in jail, maybe years. I don't really know. I am going to be tried as an adult, and that's my life.

Sometimes I would think I was going to change my life, but I don't think it's going to happen.

-Chikito, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: No one said it was going to be easy to change your life. After all, it took a while to get the way it is. It will take time and effort to make it the way you'd like it to be. That's why you should start now, this very day.

Changes

I would rather change the way I am going right now, because the way I am going right now, I am going to get killed, get too sunk into the gangs, and before I end up in jail. I am glad that I got to experience this experience young, and not when I am like 19, 20, 17, 18, 16, and etc... I still have a long way to go to change my life around. So I would change my life around.

-Jacky U3, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Wanting to change is the beginning of change. It can't happen without wanting it to happen. But just wanting it doesn't make it happen, and you can't change everything all at once. Of course you have a long way to go to change your life around, but change happens to all of us all through our lives, so you could say that all of us have a long way to go. We have heard that there's an old Chinese saying: "A journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step." You have begun that journey. Keep walking.

I Need To Change

I rather change because I've been doing things my parents tell me not to do, like getting into a lot of different troubles that will or could get me killed. I don't want to listen to people that tell me to do right. I get it in my in my head, but I don't follow what they say because I let action come before words.

But after all that, I go to my friend's house and I start to think about what I've done to that person and what will they do in the street when they see me somewhere alone.

-Octavio U3, SF/YGC

From The Beat: If you fear that what you are doing could get you killed, then the time to stop doing it is now. Some decisions are just not worth putting off because some consequences are so serious, that wishing to go back in time won't change them. How can you start thinking the things you do before you do them, and not wait until after they're done? We know you will make the changes that maturity will bring, but if you get caught up, you may never get to that point.

Unforgettable

I love my big sister because she helps me stay in place and think about myself, instead of my peers, and to think about my life and how I want to become in life. I miss my sister and I will never forget my sister. She's my heart.

-Moo Moo U5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: One of the hardest things about being locked up is being taken away from those you love, like your sister. But your love will last forever, while your incarceration is only a stop along the way to a better future. Next time we want you to choose just one topic, and write a lot more about it. You are too good a writer to be cheating us out of your more detailed thinking.

Why Is My Mind Corrupt?

What's good Beat? Today I want to talk about why my mind is corrupt. Every day, every night, evil lurks in my mind. I pray day and night to change my ways. I try to change my ways the best I can, but I don't seem to change, only a little. While one day I will be good and helpin' others do good, the next minute I'm fightin' or thinkin' 'bout killing someone.

If people knew what goes on in my head, they would want me dead. I hope when I get out I don't think this way 'cause I'm going to take action fast. I don't want I come back to jail, but the way I think someone goin' to get hurt so he on alert.

-Bilitant U3, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You know, Bilitant, it's only your actions that you can control, and not your thoughts. When you warn that somebody may get hurt because you will "take action fast," we know (and we believe you know) that you are the someone who will be hurt the most, whatever you might do to someone else. Despite what you call your "corrupt mind," you reveal some real strengths. For example, just to call it "corrupt" and "evil" tells us that you are fighting against these urges because you don't think they're right. That's a strength. Praying to change, and changing even a little is another strength. But the greatest strength is your honesty in facing these demons that drive you to do things you later regret, and force you to face consequences you most definitely regret. Have you ever talked to a "professional" person about your thoughts, say a psychologist or psychiatrist? We don't know if that would help you or not, but we do know that finding the basis of your anger (which is almost certainly pain) can help you to tame it. Running from your thoughts and just trying to put them out of your head is probably not a very effective strategy (any more than dulling those thoughts with alcohol or drugs). Facing them, and talking about them with someone who has some experience in what they might mean and how you might deal with them so that they don't hurt you any further than they have is something we hope you'll consider. In the meantime, The Beat is always open for you to express yourself, and if there's anything we can do to help you through it, reach out to us. We will reach back.

My Future Is School, Not Jail

I would change my life, because I don't want to be in jail. I want to get out of here as soon as possible, and when I get out of here, I want to go to school, then on to high school, and maybe go to college. I'll do anything rather than be in here, jail.

-William U5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You don't have to "do anything" to stay out of jail, you only have to keep the promises you make to yourself in this short but meaningful piece. School is not only your ticket out of jail, it is your ticket to a future you want for yourself and your family.

The Way I Chose

I had a choice to live the way I live. No one told me to do the things I do for fun. No one told me this world wasn't rough. I chose the gang and my friends. I can't stop now. The hole is too deep. I'm trying to get a grip, but with this change in my pocket, that's the way I chose.

-Alfonso, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: So, you made some bad choices. Now you can make some good choices. What's important to you? What would really help to make you happy? And what about your family? Do they like the choices you've been making lately?

Choosing To Change

If I had a choice to change my life or not, I would choose to change it, because I wouldn't want to be locked up all my life. I would like to be there with my family and go out with them for the first time in my life, because I never chose to go with them. But if I had to, I will go right now and be with them and get good grades in school and don't get in trouble by the law any more, and take back everything I said to my family.

-Jb Money U5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: What do you mean "If" you had a choice to change? Of course you have a choice. We all do. In fact, regretting past mistakes only has importance if it means changing to avoid those mistakes in the future. You will be with your family again, JB, but only you can know whether the promises you make here will be kept. We hope so.

Money's More Valuable Than Time

Money is more valuable to me because, like money helps me get through life, like buying my clothes, cars, jewelry, and things for my family. Time is valuable to me because if I don't have time, I won't be able to get the money dat I work for during time I was hustling to get the dip.

So pretty much, time and money is valuable to me because I cannot waste time or money on stupid things.

-Young Magic U4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This piece shows that you thought about this before you wrote, and that's always a good thing. Of course, money is important because it buys us things. But without time, it doesn't matter how many things we have. You can make and lose a fortune many times in life, but once time is gone, it's gone forever.

Giving Up The Stupid Stuff

I would change now, 'cause what happened, how I'm in here, 'cause I'm not gone lie... I was havin' a lot of guns and gangbangin', so I need to stop and change my life. Now I know, when I get out, I'm gonna change. I'm going to give up all that stupid stuff and go to school more, stay out of trouble, show my lil' bra the good way, not the bad way, and be a jockey.

Yeah, all you ninjas might think I'm going soft. No, I'm getting a new life when I get out, while you punks in here coming back and forth, but I still get on you.

But, yeah, back to what I was talking about. Yeah, but I still want to change my life, get some new friends, and everything else.

-Lil' D U5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You have to be careful about calling others "punks" for coming back and forth when nobody knows what the future holds. The promises you make are very encouraging, but they are only words on paper. We have read these words many times, but we have seen many of the writers of those words lose their freedom again when they make those same bad choices. Your little brother will follow what you do and not what you tell him to do, so think of him whenever you may be tempted to fall back into old ways. We know you are able to make your words a reality, but until you do, they are still just words...

Being More Aware Of Life

If I were on my Ps and Qs I probably would not be here, not trying to do what I want to do without being aware. I could have did what I want but in a good way. Now look, the whole beginning to the 2007 year up in Juvenile hall. I could have been with my family, but no, I wanted to hang with my friends and I ended up in jail. I could have been using this time better than being up in here. So that's that.

-Lil' Shadow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Being aware and recognizing the problem is the first step, the next step is your action. What will you do when you get this chance again?

Money

My time is money, but it don't make my world go 'round. My world is at a hold because of money. I am sitting in a cell. My time is passing me by.

I am only 17, with two cases, because I feel like money made my world go 'round and I put more time angling it the wrong way and not the right way, and I'm paying time, not money, and my time is more important to me than money.

-Moo Moo U5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Yes, you have put the progress of your life on slowdown, but it has not stopped. It's clear from this that you are using your time to think about things in a serious and mature way, and that can only be good for your future. Keep thinking. And keep writing.

Do Something Worthwhile With Time

To me, time is a little more important than money, 'cause with time you put effort, and time will help you in the long run. But getting money is the reason why people are locked up today.

Now, when people get locked up, they time is wasted, instead of taking time to go to school, going to work or just doing anything worthwhile that's going to help you in the long-run.

-Young G U4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Time moves forward, whether we use it or it uses us, so we agree with you that if you want to help yourself in the long run, you have to use your time wisely today. To many young people are only concerned with the short-run, and so they go after instant gratification (money, things), and cheat themselves out of a decent future. It sounds like you don't want to do that to yourself, and we want to applaud you for that.

Please Don't Go

I told my sons' mother I might be gone for a year to the Log Cabin Ranch. And she told me that she might move away, that a year is too long for her to wait. I really don't care if she moves away, 'cause I hate her guts, but if she moves, that means my son will be leaving with her.

Today I went to court and they said I'm going to the Ranch, but not because I have to but because my public pretender said that I should. I don't know what's going to happen now, but if I go to the Ranch and my son moves to Chicago that will be my snapping point.

I really hope I don't go to the Ranch 'cause I don't want to lose what makes me want to be a better person.

-Baby Duce U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You're in a very difficult position, BD, and we don't envy you. We hope you can think about all the consequence of what it would mean to "snap," not just for your own future, but for your future relationship with your son. We hope your BM doesn't take your son to Chicago, but if she does, that doesn't spell the end of your connection, it only adds physical distance. We hope you think hard before you do something that will add more than just physical distance by putting yourself deeper into the criminal justice hole, or creating a "story" the BM can tell your son to try to paint a picture of you that isn't the real you. Chicago is only a bus ride away. Think about it.

Would I Rather Change My Life Or Keep It The Same?

I would rather keep my life the way it is because I'm good at the dirt that I've been doin'. I've tried to go to school and do good, but that shhh ain't me, so I just went back to being how I used to be. I also wouldn't change because all the shhh I've been through has made me the ninja I am today. Even the bad shhh has taught me lessons that I'll never forget, so I wouldn't change my life because I love it.

-Ray Ray, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We would like to speak with your teacher, young man, because we don't approve of his/her lessons. You have a better chance of hitting the Lotto than coming up doing dirt. If you're so good at the dirt that you do, what are you doing behind bars? As good as you think you are at doing dirt, the police are better at catching those who do dirt and they always will be. Accept this because it's a fact and not our opinion. Mark our words, stop being ignorant because this is a game you will never win. Please do not wake up when it's already too late.

Time Is Better Than Money

The things people do for money is not necessary. Some kill for it. But me, I get it the way it's needed to be got, feel me. I got a job now, so I don't need to grind no more fo' shoes or fits. I spend hard time working a job and not the block, feel me. Hard work pays off when it's da gold way

-Lil' Scari The Youngsta U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: What is this job you have that you work so hard at? Doesn't it feel better to be putting money in your pocket that your own labor produced, rather than preying off the labor of others? Tell us about your job.

The Most Unforgettable Character I Ever Met

When I was about ten, I remember this ninja named "Snake" from Oakland. He was about his money. I used to look up to him. He was like my big bra'. We used to go everywhere and do everything, but some shhh got to change and ninjas got tired of seeing him shining so hard, so they killed him. That was something I would never forget, so whenever I am out there on the block, I know he with me.

Right now, I am cool. I ain't mad 'cause I understand shhh better now. I make about seventy G's a month, and twenty of that, I give to his family 'cause it be hard for me to watch his son who's used to having nothing but the best, not having nothing 'cause his Dad gone.

I keep it real until it's over with....The Fed's then hit my mom's house and took her truck I got her for Christmas, so that then made me upset. Plus, I am trying to still do my thang while I'm here and I got ninjas out there dealin' with my money that I can't trust, so right now, I am doin' a lot of thinking...R.I.P. Snake

-That Ninja, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If you're not careful, you're going to be resting in peace with your homeboy. Being involved in dirt can lead to you being six feet under dirt and it's only natural that by being involved in shady things, you'll come across shady characters. We know you mean well, but you could give your friend's son all the money in the world and it will still never replace not having his father around, and it also can't buy back all the time you do behind bars. What good is having a lot of money if you can't enjoy it? Instead of following in your friend's footsteps, read between the lines and see that if he can be touched, you can, too. You have your own family to think about. If your friend's family still feels bad about his loss, imagine your own? We know you just want to help, but you need to think about helping yourself first and getting out of this situation before you can even think about helping others. You are one smart man, who we so wish will use your smarts to better our life and learn from your friends a and family how shady this thug living is. Break the mold!

RIP Weezy I Miss You

I wish them ninjas would of
Never took you from me
Now I got no one to look up to,
But I know you watchin' over me
Tell Davon I said "What's up?"
And that I miss him, too,
But I'm gonna move on with my life
Look up to Mac
He brought Mom's up
To see me
And I was glad
She really don't get up here that often
Them ninjas who killed you
One of them was in here
And I'm not going to say anything
Because I don't want to see anymore blood
Sorry I couldn't go to your funeral
The judge wouldn't let me out,
But as soon as I touch down,
Believe me I'm going to your grave
To talk to you
That is all for now,
But I will be getting back at y'all
RIP Weezy, Davon, Jay-Jay, B-Bo, Critty Bo, Ron Ron,
and J5
I miss y'all.

-Maine Bo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We're glad to see that you didn't do anything. Violence only begets violence. It's a shame that you are so young, yet you know so many people who have died. You should consider yourself blessed to still be alive. If your friends could come back and tell you one thing, we bet whatever amount you want that they would tell you to get out of this Bull shhh while you still can. Change your ways before it's your funeral that people are attending.

Don't Want To Change My Life

I rather keep my life the same than change it. My life is cool but the ninja I used to run with and talk, chop it up, did me dirty. The ninja I let in my house met moms. Ever since then they just influence me to sell and do robberies for them. I would want to change that part of my life.

The part I would want to keep... the part inside of me that love the people, that really cares and loves.

-Showtime U2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Sounds like you want to keep the good part. Hopefully, you will also learn to love yourself and respect your own knowledge of what's right and wrong so that nobody can influence you to do anything you don't want to do. To keep it real, you did yourself "dirty," so learn from that for the next time around. We've all made mistakes, but the only real mistake is if we don't learn from them.

Time Or Money

What's more important to me is time. I rather be out there having a good time than just having money in my pocket. Having money in my pocket, I mean you could just go out there and get whatever you want and have everything I ever wanted, but for real, that's not what it is about.

I rather be broke and shhh, but having a good time, kicking it, and doing whatever. I feel one is more valuable than the other because it really is because money comes and it goes and when you out there having a good time and everything, all those memories and all stay.

Time also doesn't just come and go because if it goes, it's a wrap. There ain't no coming back for you. It's just going to be gone forever and what's that money going to do you good for? The money ain't gonna bring you back.

-Francisco

From The Beat: You're 100% on point: You can buy a lot of things with money, but you can't buy back the time you're doing behind bars. Too many young people get caught up in material things like grills, whips, gear, etc., but it is refreshing to see that you know what is truly valuable. You have a good head on your shoulders. Now put it to use! A mind is a terrible thing to waste, especially one that is bright like yours.

Find My Way

When I started to get locked up I told myself I'm gonna stop when I'm sixteen. But when I finally touched down sixteen, I forgot all about what I told myself when I first started getting locked up.

Now I'm back in here at camp for the second time. I wanted to change but I didn't know how to, and then I started to do crime because I can't stay broke. I didn't like this jail life, that's the reason why I chose to change my life. And I wanted to do the right thang.

There ain't nothing is holdin' me back but I just can't find my way to change my life.

When I'm out there with thousands and thousands of dollars I be thinkin' like I like this life, but I got the money in a bad way. That's why I chose to change my life because I'm going to have to change one day so I could change now. Before I get too deep and get caught and get some major time. I need to stop living in the fast lane before I get taken out the game. I'm out.

-Zuko, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's a hard temptation to resist, all that money calling out to you, especially when all we see on tv and movies, and all we hear on the radio, is about about gold and bling and cars and clubs. It takes a strong person to resist that call, and it takes a lot of nourishment to keep a person strong. What nourishes you, what adds to your strength? We can see from this essay that you understand and know yourself well, and you've really been thinking about this for a while, so we bet you have answers. Tell us, what makes you stronger. Because the more of that you find, the easier it will be to stand tall and say NO next time those temptations beckon again.

Can't Bring Time Back

Time and money is very important because you can't bring time back. Money just come and go because you can use a hundred dollars and still get it back. Now time is a whole 'nother story. You can't do nothing about it. You're going to keep getting older and older, then die. So that's why you take your life slow and easy.

But yeah, you just stop wasting time trying get money if you going to get caught with it.

-Reese-C Baby U2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: How will you "take your life slow and easy?" Were you living your life in a rush before? How do you slow it down? What are some of the things you plan to focus more time on when you're answering to yourself? What are some of the things you plan to focus less time on? Can you see yourself doing this for real? We can!

I Want To Change!

I want to change my lifestyle the way I'm living right now, because I'm not heading in the right direction, in and out of Juvenile Hall, in and out of handcuffs, the police always harassing me. So my plans when I get out of this camp life and criminal life.

Always robbing people, never going to school, well I got to change fast because my lil' brother is starting to follow in my footsteps. My parents are getting upset, and of course my girlfriend gets sad all the time.

And I hate that so I'm a have to get my life together get back in school try to finish High School, walk the stage probably try to go to a community college and try to get a decent job, so I can make a lil' money to keep me on my feet, get my car and try to get my own place because I'm tired of living with my parents.

I'm sixteen going on seventeen, in a couple of months so I gotta get my shhh together before it gets too late.

-Lil' Ant The Chosen One, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We can feel the urgency of this piece as we read it, we can feel how bad you want things to be better. And yes, you should have hands and arms free to live your life, not shackled in handcuffs. It breaks our heart to imagine your little brother following in a dangerous direction, but there's also so much love in your writing. For and from your parents, for and from your girlfriend, for and from your lil' bro. That love will help carry you out of this darkness, if you let it.

Man Life Is Cold

I hope I go to the crossroad
 That's my goal
 There's a story untold
 Let the money flow
 I need my CD sold
 No more nonsense I suppose
 What I say goes rapper
 On the road they getting the gold
 Something like million
 It make me feel real brilliant
 Like my patna momo
 Man he's militant
 I earn this steal man
 I'm so generous when it comes to this
 Our government is ridiculous
 So why not smash some shhh
 Why you pull a lick
 Going down not worth
 Not to me
 I'm not havin' it

-Young F, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Keep flowin' positive. Saying the right message in the right medium can have huge impact. Imagine if all the famous rappers out there were rhyming about being positive and respecting women, respecting human life and taking care of your responsibilities - how do you think the youth would respond? Do you think it would change your culture? Do you think if all the most famous rappers hated on killers that there would be less killings? We do.

Change Or No Change

Change or no change.

Change is needed in the world;
 people need to stop going to the hall,
 stop committing crimes.

But if you really don't care about change this doesn't
 apply to you

so keep it lit and do what you do.

But I know what I'm gonna do
 by the age sixteen I should be sitting on 22's.

Going back to school and do something with myself
 because getting put in jail is nasty as hell.

-Lil' Mamani, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's good to hear you thinking about change. Everyone has some kind of change they need to work toward, and you have a lot of challenges to go up against that will make your job harder than some others—but the result could be that much more inspired. Good luck?

Time Is On My Side

Well I can say time is important to me because you need time. Time is what we have. I need time to regain things I lost, suckas my freedom, that's why time is important to me.

Money is important to me because I need it to survive. It's like a lifeline for me, cut it off and I couldn't live. Plus everybody needs money. It's one of the main things that people in the world should be more subjected to getting. That's why I think money is important

I like my life the way it is because I am addicted to the fast life. That's just the way I am. But I need to change for reasons such as my younger siblings and my mother because she doesn't want me out there doin' the things I do, like selling drugs. But I like it and that's a reason why and why not.

-Kevin, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We're right with you on the money. Without it, we wouldn't have the paper to print, the computers to type, the cars we use to get to workshops, the food that will keep us strong while we do them. But money is worth nothing if the money we make takes us away from our loved ones, adds to our stress, costs us our freedom. What about the long term - in the long term, what are some ways you can make money that won't bring you so much suffering?

My Best Friend, Jesus Christ

What up Beat?

I want to let you guys in on a little secret, that life is hard,
 that means do your best in life, love one another and stay humble.

That means don't react to stupid stuff. Just try to relax.

I turned my life around to Jesus Christ.

He is the only way out.

The Bible is like my best friend because it gives me knowledge, wisdom, and honesty. The Bible also tells me how to love one another and to pass your worries on to God.

Let God know how you feel. He loves all.

If you want to be saved in the name of Jesus Christ,
 you must say and mean from your heart.

Jesus is the Lord and God rose Jesus from the dead,
 Saved in the name of the Lord.

-Bebe The Son Of God, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Nice little piece Bebe. We suspect most readers will agree with you that life is hard and that it is so important to have support. Obviously you have found that in your God and Jesus Christ. We hope that your future gets better and you find by making better choices and having your God in your life, living in the system will be a thing of the past, as you help yourself and touch others with kindness.

Regrets

Hey Beat, what's crackin'?

Man, it's pretty stressful for me right now. They trying to send me to a drug rehab for 12 to 18 months! I don't even mess with drugs like that. So what's the point? Feel me?

I made the title of this called "Regrets." The reason for that is because I regret a lot of things that I've done. The one thing I regret the most is getting caught up in the system, 'cause once your in, it's very difficult to get out.

These people don't even care if we get out, they really want us to do bad, 'cause we are their payroll. They make money off of us doing bad, that is bullshh. These people don't care about us, not at all. We could get hit by a bus and be killed, and they wouldn't even care, real talk. The system is scandalous! Peace.

-Lil' Jj, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Man, it's pretty terrible to have to fave drug treatment if you don't think you have a problem. Why do they think you have a problem? Is there any reason they would have to send you there. One thing you're right about is how hard it is to get out of the system once you're in it. It means you have to be extra careful.

This Time

This is your boy Lil ' Cheeno. Well one of the questions of this week was "what's more valuable time or money?"

Well to me time is more important because money comes and goes. But you can't go back in time, so for whatever trouble money gets you into, imagine all the things you could have done before you got locked up for being in the corner, getting that money selling drugs or out there being a hustler.

You could of been out there with your family or with your female. But instead you're locked up, wishing you had time to spend with your loved ones. Remember you live once in this world, and we can't go back in time... so when you get out of the hall or wherever you might be, think about what you do with your time and spend your time wisely.

Well that's it for me Beat. Check you guys out later.

-Cheeno, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Speaking of time, these words were so wise that it was hard to believe they were written by someone who has spent less than two decades in the planet. And you're right - if you lose your money you can always get it back or eventually replace it. But if you lose your time, you can never get it back, ever. It's gone. That's why time is the most precious thing there is... that's one of the worst things about jail - it steals your time.

Nothing But Love For You

"Change Shhh ... I guess is change is good for many of us, or whatever it takes to get out of the hood. Shhh I ain't mad at you. I got nothing but love for you, do ya' thang..."

Man... that pretty much explains it, and for those who don't know, those are the introduction words of a real stand-up guy, someone like me. Because change is good, so I make it a goal for me to little-by-little every day to better myself.

In general, with me, I plan to change the course of my life because I lived it fast: streets, money, cars, and all the shhh with little to show for it, so I'm gon' become a part of the "real game" and get involved with check stubs and things of that nature. Basically take it slow, like John Legend.

Really, the fact of the matter is that everything has to change or adjust, to survive and the things that don't cease to exist or have become extinct so, to all of you Beat readers:

Make a change.

-Kid, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The buddhists say that the best way to understand the world is with these three words: "Not always so." Everything changes, birth to death, summer to winter, youth to age, sorrow to joy and back to sorrow again. Once we start to realize that life is about change, we start to flow with it, and like you say "everything has to change and exist." What are these little by little adjustments that you are going to make?

The Way I Think

Is this the life I want to live

In and out of jail

Feeling like I'm burning in hell

But I'm really in a cell with no bail

Trying to think about my family and my son

Think will I see them again

Because the judge don't know what to do

He say ROP but the DA saying CYA

I'm thinking about all the good times I had

And how they is falling down the drain

I feel like I'm in the hall of shame

Feeling so much pain it ain't no game

This is real life so you better think twice before you
figh

That's a new charge that means two more months
behind bars Looking straight up at the stars

Wondering if I see the sky again

Wondering what it'd be like if I had a twin

It's like I'm in it to win

But I'm not, I'm losing bad

People say it's sad to see me doing wrong

But that's all I know so I go with the flow

I hustle for a living but they send me home for
thanksgiving

I ran and ran from my time

And now I'm back like they pushed rewind

So I got to start it over

To me life is over

I think fast hit the gas

And wonder what can I do to survive

Me and you

-Bobby, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Great piece. It's real, it flows, it's aware, it's questioning. Good job. Don't stop writing. You've got some skills.

Money

I would like to have time, 'cause without time you can't make money and making money the right way is going to last longer, but some of us like to make money the bad way cause it's faster but at the end it all falls down so it can't tell others not to make money how they want to is all I'm saying. Right money is the best you can put right money in bank accounts. That wrong money is going to be hard to put in a bank, and you got use your time right. 'Cause if you don't you gon' be lost in the world.

-Young Life, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Wise words - now walk that talk, and tell us how you plan on earning that "right money" when you get out. Have you hooked up with a program, have you got someone waiting for you with a job when you get out? The first time you deposit a paycheck into your own bank account feels good, we can tell you. Earned money doesn't just fill your pockets, it fills your pride.

Advice for Anyone Coming up to Camp

What's good Beat? This is Grim from Hayward. Man I'm pissed off, I got bit by a spider on my toe and it hurts like hell. I tried to get a TR, but they said no. They let other ninjas go on TR's for stupid reasons. I can't even walk right.

If you coming up here at camp, check your beds, that's if you don't wanna get bit. My foot swolled up. Well, that's about it, besides going a lot of programs that would be good for you up here. Well that's it for now, till pen meets paper.

-Grim, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Good advice Grim, and thanks for taking a time out of your day to think on all the youngsters down below, wondering what to expect when they hit camp. What would life be if we couldn't learn from other people's experience!

Would You Rather Change Your Life Or Keep it?

If I had a chance I would change some things, but keep others. Like I would like to change my social life, the people I hang out with and the people I affiliate with. If I changed that, in the first I wouldn't be locked up.

I would keep my knowledge and my thinking because I'm a very smart person.

I would change my slang and the way I talk to people. I would keep my family because they care for me and love me very much.

When I'm in here I think of what I've done in the past and present. And I think about the future of when and where I'm gonna be. Hopefully not in jail but at home.

-Alex, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's very wise to recognize that things are not black and white, not right or wrong, not good or bad. There are many facets to every situation, every person, every circumstance and you recognize that. You have really amazing qualities that lift you up and some other ones that drag you down. The great thing is that once you realize what those things are that drag you down, you can start trying to change them for the better. You're one step ahead of the game.

Second Chance

Everyone wants a second chance.

Everyone deserves one, but the system doesn't give them one.

The ones that get them, the system knows that they are coming back, but if they think that you're not coming back,

they are not going to give you one, so everyone that's locked up waiting for that second chance,

it will come because they can't keep you locked up forever.

-Ali, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Why do you think the system is set up the way you think it is? You know what we think? We think that those who got a second chance and didn't take advantage of it messed it up for everyone else. When you make a mistake, you try not to make it twice, right? When a judge gives someone another chance and that person doesn't value it, it changes that judge's way of thinking. Don't forget that judges are people like you, too. You can't control what other people do, but you can control what you do. Whenever you are given a second chance, do what many others didn't and take advantage of yours to the fullest.

When I Get Out

When I get out I want to see my little brother and my two sisters doing good in school because I don't want to see them in the same position I'm in. So I'd tell them to be good in school and play some sports instead of being in the street grindin' for money like their big brother, or committing robberies.

I support my little brother and two sisters and always be there for the two of them until the day I die and I don't want to see neither one of them dead before me 'cause that will hurt the hell outta me. So that my goal, when I get out, is to support my little brother and two sisters.

-Weezy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Remember the expression do as I say, not as I do? It's an ironic thing to say, especially to youngsters, because the way they learn is from watching and imitating their elders. We don't know what you need to do to support your brother and sister, but if you don't want them to end up doing the things you do, don't ever let them see you do it, because sure as hell, they're going to want to be like their big brother. Your goal is very honorable. We hope you can make it happen.

Change Or Stay Tha Same

Well Beat, it's the prince and my topic is would I rather change or stay the same? I would change because for one, I got a lil' girl so I want to show her somethin' other than the streets, drugs and all the other stuff I've done wrong growing up in the streets of Oakland.

Also I wanna change for myself, my family and my dead brotha (RIP Christian F.) so I'm gon' seriously try my hardest to stop coming to jail, plus I go to court tomorrow 2-7-07 hopefully I finally go home and start this major change.

I got a lot of stuff I plan on doing for me, my lil' girl and my family. Oh yeah wish me luck.

-Lil' Solid, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You have the right idea, the right attitude, you know what your priorities are, but you know it's still not going to be easy. Can you write yourself a list of all the things that will keep you from staying on track, whether it's people, places, actions, etc.? Once you have that list, memorize it and each time something from that list, you should hear an alarm go off in your head that says this is the wrong track, let me steer back onto the right track. Good luck Lil' Solid!

Forgive Me

I never speak as much, only in my head.

Like my older sister said, she glad that I'm a live then dead.

Since I'm wrapped in this situation I'm in,

I ask God to forgive me and all my bad sins.

It's now time to meet new people not have fake friends.

-J-Money, 150 Crew

From The Beat: They say it's the quiet ones you have to watch out for, because while other people are running their mouths, the quiet ones are listening, catching things other people don't. Do you think that's true of you too? Where will you find your new true friends?

Addiction: Horrible Or Good. Part 1

I have lived a crazy life, since I found out what drugs were. I have found out a lot about myself going through everything I did. People may look at what I have done through my childhood horrible but I just look at it as my journey to find my true inner self?

I never had a bad childhood. My mom and pops were always there for me every step of the way. They always supported me with everything. Then I found out what drugs were. I smoked my first blunt and everything went downhill from there. I was only ten at the time and I didn't know what I was getting myself into. ...

-Artist, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This new name of yours is well-chosen. You are an artist, with images and with words - that means that as an artist you must continually be learning new skills, new ways of drawing, new ways of writing. How are you training yourself, what books are you reading, what painters' work are you paying attention to, so you can feed your creative soul? We'd love to see you take some of those talents for a training by using them to break down this piece you just wrote? What were/are your parents like? You say you had a good childhood, but didn't you also learn some hard facts of life, pretty young? How did things later go downhill? This has all the makings of a meaningful story, a story that is worthy of an ... Artist.

Camp vs. the Hall

What up Beat Within this is your homie Rick from Oakland. I'm coming at you from camp.

Damn it's good that they give you home passes over at camp, so you could go out here and see your family. Not only that but you get to see what's going on in the outs. Camp is OK, you're not in one room all day like in the hall up in camp, you're outside, just doing what you want, playing pool, basketball or playing the Nintendo's, like game Cube or PS2.

But to get that privilege to do that you have to be good and it's kinda hard another thing that is cool is that you get to have a radio up here but you have to be good.

-Rick, 150 Crew

From The Beat: A lot of detainees stuck in the Hall will be glad to hear this good news about life on the hill... it's one step closer to freedom, a step closer to hope. You probably just made someone's heart a little lighter.

Something I Wrote

i remember like it was yesterday
last time i was out in oh-five going crazy
always fighting because ninjas used to hate me
the youngest and shortest person on the whole block
ninjas tryin'a slow me down but i would not stop
now i'm giving my life away to this stupid system
when all i had to do was listen
i shouldn't be up in here, i should be playing a sport
dribbling the basketball up and down the court
man i miss the outs right now
up in my hood
i'm tryin'a get out and get my stuff together
and shine like the sun, no matter the weather

-Lil' Larry, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The only one who can stop you from giving your whole life to the system, is the one who can write poems just like this one — no one else but yourself.

Money To Survive

If I had to choose between time or money, I'll choose money — because without money, you can't survive in this world.

Without money you can't feed, clothe or shelter yourself. Why do you think people are homeless? No money! So they live free by sleeping on sidewalks with garbage bags and cardboard hotels. It even costs money to be in juvenile hall!

Most of us youngstas grind for rims and new fits. Some of us grind to put food in our stomachs. Or we could do it the right way — get employed to a full-time job and get a paycheck. But either way it goes, if we were to take a survey, ninety-nine per cent would choose money over time because time won't help you survive.

-Damo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We didn't run a survey, but we didn't find ninety-nine per cent of our writers choosing money over time. Quite a few side-stepped and said they need both. Yet many felt that time with loved ones, or time out of the system — time to do what you want with those you love is more important than just money. Imagine that you're going to die tomorrow. Now what good is that money going to do you? Don't lose your life or freedom chasing fast money — take your time.

Unforgettably Me

The most unforgettable, unusual, crazy person I've ever met? Now that's a hard question to answer, because out of the hundreds of people I've met — I'm surely the strangest!

You could go to my old school, mention my name to some random person, and they'll tell you a story about "capes and leashes" or "drama and drugs"! All my friends would answer that question about the strangest person they ever met — with my name!

It's not because I choose to, want to or need to appear strange to others. Rather it's simply because I want to be me, and that's why people seem to always call me: "an unforgettable character".

-Esoteric Rainbow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Okay, we believe that the real you necessarily appears strange to others, but we don't believe that "drama and drugs" is a necessary part of being yourself. You told us more about the "capes and leashes" story, and it sounded pretty harmless (even if your friend might benefit from some exercises in self-esteem; on the other hand, have you ever seen the photo of Friedrich Nietzsche pulling a cart holding Salome with a whip in hand — of course it was a joke; however, it was less funny when years later he was locked in the madhouse thinking he was Jesus Christ: the moral of the story being that for some role-playing games can get out of hand and become genuinely self-destructive). Back to the point about "capes and leashes" — you could be straight-edge, wear a red cape and be yourself. Why add drugs to the mix when quite clearly just being you already puts you out on the edge? With all due respect, look at where you are right now.

My Grandpa

My grandpa was a great man
he and my grandmother took me and my two younger
brothers in
their custody when we were babies.
My mother had been in jail since I was two.
My father is nowhere to be found,
as a rolling stone I was,
to get it on my own by my self I was taught.
Led me to trouble, ending up here
now you see me in the flesh.

-King Kal, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sometimes our paths seem to be predestined, like we have no control over where they'll take us because everything that we've ever known has been a certain way. But the brightest stars shine in the darkest places, and you should know that the examples shown to you don't bind you to the same fate—you can do what you want with your experience, and we think you're smart enough to do something good.

(Stop) Smokin'

smoke one or smoke two
but in the end what does it do
do you think you'll get far smokin' grapes and rollin' bars
do you think you can succeed cuttin' school and smokin'
weed
how many places will you go with half a brain that's hella
slow
"is it really worth it" sometimes i'd wonder
but now i know it's not 'cause punishment hits hard like
thunder
when you're doin' drugs and failin' tests
you're thinkin' of yourself and not the rest
you think everything is great and funny
until your sittin' in a room that don't get sunny
now i understand
that doin' thing like this ain't a good plan

-Young J, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It begins with seeing the truth and facing the facts, and with this poem you accomplish that. But then there's still the follow through, when times get hard and life feels cruel. Still, if you can feel the pain and not run from the rain seeking the shelter of a cloud of illusion — the pain will pass and with it your confusion. Stay strong and keep on keepin' on!

Life Or Death

you think you get down brah
you ain't the only one
my ninja' play
and go on one fo' days
but that ain't what it's about
i got to find a way out
'cause i don't want to be in rita
or even worse: dead on the out

-Jesus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your poem brings the truth home, 'cause locked away or shot to death by a AK is not the way. Your way out will be to seek and find a j-o-b. Get that good diploma or GED, then stay out the street, safe and free — stacking money legally.

It's All Valuable!

To me both time and money is valuable to me. Without any time, there is no money and without money you can't survive at all. If I really had to choose I would pick time because time is more precious than anything. Time is precious because of how you spend it and who you spend it with. If you spend your time productively then it is a possibility that you can gain money. Depends on who you spend your time with, that time can become a precious moment.

-Vanessa, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We like your perspective. It places value on the most important things. If you have those things, then you can seek the money later.

The Army Vs. The Streets

Dre : Bra, what's up? What you gon' be when you get older?

Chuckie: I'm to Army. And you?

Dre: I'm gon' be a hustler

Chuckie: That shhh ain't gonna get you nowhere but the pen

Dre: It's better than gettin' bombed.

Chuckie: Who said I'm about to get bombed at? If that's the way your mentality runs, fo' sure you heading towards the pen. I'm just sayin' I'd rather get stabbed, than get my head blew off. But there's no guarantee I get stabbed, plus I'm not getting caught. Never say you won't get caught. Don't think about what you have or what you want to have. Think about your future, and if I make it out the Army, my life is blessed.

Dre: There's no way you gettin' out unless you never start 'cause the president ain't gon' send for you unless he win or lose and if he lose you're f*&^%ed.

Chuckie: See though, you thinking negative, in my mind. I don't never think what I can't complete if I can't do it, I'ma die tryin'.

Dre: Well you go ahead and die tryin'. As for me, I don't wanna die at all, 'cause I'm tryin' right now --tryin' to live.

Chuckie: Yeah, you gonna live but live without a future.

-Dre and Chuckie, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This debate stuck with us for a long time after we read it, because you are both make interestign points. It seems like neither option is all that great, maybe because both of them are based on young people being put in "harm's way" as the Army likes to say. It's a war on the streets, it's a war in the Army, so maybe the question for both of you to ask is - is there a third way? Because having to choose between a bullet with an American flag on it, or a bullet with an Oakland tag on it... that doesn't seem like much of a choice. What about getting work, tutors, a mentoring program? We also want to add that we know soldiers who have served a few stints in Iraq and are alive and well, back home, living a legit life. Not all soldiers die.

Three Answers, Three Questions

1. Time and money 'cause I have patience and money. I like having money in my pocket.

2. Yes 'cause I want to start off with a new life. Nothing's holdin' me back. I'm just waiting to finish the program.

3. My brother was unforgettable to me. Before he died he was my role model. I loved him, he showed me how to do good. I wish he was still here today. We had fun playing games and football together with his friends and me. I wish I had a real positive friend instead of a negative friend.

-DeShawn, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If you want to write up an RIP for your brother we would be honored to show him respect in The Beat. Just from these few words, he sounds like an extraordinary person. If he were alive today, what kind of advice do you think he would have for you on finding positive friends?

So Everybody In The World Can See How We Feel

If I can send The Beat to anywhere, I will send it from jail to jail, pen to pen, state to state, so that everybody in the world can read how we feel 'bout the world, 'bout bein' locked up, 'bout how we livin', how we serve in the street. It ain't easy, how people say it is. That's who I will send The Beat to.

-Lav-L, Marin

From The Beat: Great idea. You may not be able to send it to the whole world, but there might be people who would love to read your expressions. Have you ever sent a Beat to anyone you know, in or our of jail? If so, what did they think about it?

Hurt

You've broken my heart,
And bent my pride
You even got on your knees,
Through your teeth you lied.

You've torn me from my family
Took my back up plan.
You knocked me off my feet
Then bravely lent a hand.

The knowledge that I gave you
You used to manipulate your prey
You stalked young naive girls
And thought by your side I'd stay

Well I was once naïve
And taken advantage of
And let me tell you baby boy
I'm stealing back my love.

You no longer own my heart,
I'm slowly repairing my pride
I've let you in this game
Now in this game you've died!

-Vanessa, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We have all lost ourselves at some point, but most of us come back to reclaim ourselves and our emotions and our strength. It sounds like you are doing this and we're proud of you girl!

Steady Mobbin'

I'm in here still sittin' waitin', going back 'n forth to court. I feel blessed, hopin' that I am. But yeah, I'm still mobbin', ready to go back and get this money, tryin' my best to clean my act up so when I do get out I could train myself not do nothin' stupid. Most of all, I'm ready to be around some females instead of keeping myself around these males.

Only thing I want to change is really what I do and how I do it at times. Me in the inside only thing I would try to change is my hatred I have against people just thinking of bad things about people all the time. My hatred make me think bad things and when I think bad things I react. So that's what I would change in my life. People that I be mad at is whoever make me mad... it's both anger and hatred.

-Lil' Marcus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is one of the most mature pieces you've ever written for The Beat, because it shows you looking deep inside to understand the feelings you have inside you. Where do you think that anger and hatred comes from - and since you're starting to pay a lot more attention to The Bible and prayer, we should also ask: Do you think it's possible to a) turn the other cheek and b) love thine enemy? Does praying and thinking about those things help you fight the dark feeling you still have inside you? You are a teacher - we're all ready to learn!

Time Is Money

To me, I think time is more important than money, because in time you have good moments and bad moments, but then, again, money do make the world go 'round. Money is the motive.

To some people, money could solve and cure all their problems, but, to me, money is important, but then, again, it ain't. I rather have both, because time is money, but you don't get time back, so that's more important than money.

-Young Jeff LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Interesting thinking. Now that you have a lot of time down at the Ranch, do you value it? Your time may not be exactly free, but isn't it nice to be able to use your time to think about a whole lot of other things besides getting money, going back to the streets, watching your back, worrying about your life, etc.? That must be a huge relief. What about your time at the Ranch has impressed you, given you courage, and/or a new outlook on life? You can start your young life over. You have all the time in the world.

Do The Right Thing

I am changing my life 'cause when I die I want to go to Heaven. It's time for me to do right by myself or else be nothing in life at all. What these kids fail to realize is that soon we are going to be grown and then what? I have been doing this same thing for too long and I'm tired of it. I want to change the things I do.

Not too much of me on the inside because I am not a bad person, but it's just the things I do that show that I wasn't ready to be a mature young man.

You need to accept Jesus and you will never have to worry about nothing ever happening that you regret. It's not hard to change at all, you just have to be ready.

Think about where you are going to be in ten years? Are you ready to go to heaven or hell?

-Lil Tonio, God's Child, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This wonderful piece left us with so many questions. The big one, we guess, is how does "accepting Jesus" affect how you live your life? What kinds of changes have you had to make, in terms of how you think about your life, how you treat other people? Which are the hardest changes? Which are the easiest?

Money Time

Time is money.

It's everything you'll spend and on anything...

Jordans, jewelry who cares!

It ain't going nowhere.

You spend it on this, you spend it on that!

What it is, is typical black.

A person that sees things that other people want then that they flaunt

what could it be

it's money over time even energy!

Things like that make me mad.

It's the things people do for material things that's sad!

Who cares it ain't going nowhere.

You spend it on this, you spend on that.

You know what I think,

shhh money is wack!

-Starmesha, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You got that right honey. Money makes people do all sorts of crazy and horrible things. Money makes people think they're better than others. Money dictates who gets to the top, who lives a good life and who doesn't. It's the most unfair system we could have imagined. Unfortunately, we're all stuck dealing with it. The only thing we can do is try to make sure we have enough of it to live a decent life, but without letting it control us.

Trifflin'

Well today I found out that my supposed-to-be play sister and my dude did the nasty the day after I got locked up. Hella out of pocket right! I'm not even trippin' though 'cause dudes come a dime a dozen. If he was really solid he would have been like, I'm cool.

She a ripper anyway for how she got down, ya dig. We talked about it in class, me and her. I'm not worried about it 'cause ninjas is boo-boo.

I got dudes on my jock who ain't never got the cookies, calling my line, hollering that love stuff. When they get the cookies they act like it's the best thing they ever had in the world and still holler that love stuff trying to control a girl. I quit. I might turn gay, 'cause this is bull.

-Malika, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Well, we're not sure you can choose to turn gay, though if you're curious, you may want to check it out. Some people even go both ways, because they decide by the person and how much they feel them, not by the gender. If you don't like the way the boys you know are acting, then that means you're hanging out with the wrong boys. Not all boys are like that. Some are even respectful and would never want to push a girl to have sex if she weren't ready. Maybe it's time to change the company you keep for more respectful people (and we're talking about your sister to - friends don't screw their best friend's boyfriend the minute she disappears).

how friendly you are

(dedicated to my grandma)

you are

so kind

so gentle

so caring

you are

so confident in your self

you are not afraid to show

a strong sensitivity

a strong vulnerability

a strong beauty

to be so in touch

with your feelings

and emotions

it is very important to me

to understand

and learn from you

and it is very important

to me because i want

to have successful relationships

with others

so i want to thank you

for being such

a great friend

-Lil' Snow Rabbit Meli, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Our best teachers are friends and family who not only have wisdom to share with us and love to share with us, but who also teach by their own examples how we can become who we want to be — people as strong, compassionate, sensitive and beautiful as those we love and respect: for you, your grandmother is your best friend and best teacher, a role model beyond compare. We're certain that she will love reading your poem, for we know from your previous writings how very much she loves you!

To Go Back

I wish I could turn back the hands of time and do everything the right way.

I really envy the girl who is being blessed with the opportunity of having my grandma with me only. If I had listened to her, I would not be in the shhhh I'm in now.

If you got somebody telling you to do this and that, just do it because in the long run you will wish you would have listened.

I tell myself every night, if only I had listened to my grandma. But I didn't, I told her I was with my friend and she said you ain't got no friends. I'm your friend and I'm all you got baby.

-Girly, 150 Crew

From The Beat: When you're young, it's hard to remember that blood is thicker than water. All you want to do is hang around with friends and get away from your family. Funny thing is, friends come and go but family is always there. Sometimes family is good and sometimes they're bad. If you have a good one, you better recognize how lucky you are and do right by them. Sounds like your grandma is on your side. Listen to your grandma and you won't end up in state prison like your sister. I'm sure it's the last place your sister would want you to be.

Money Ain't Shhhh

Money can buy yo' life if the price is right, if you let it. Mack money just comes and goes. I can have 100 dollars and say I'm gone spend this much, but when I look around it's gone. Some do think that this life make the world go around but if they think about it, Money ain't shh.

-Girly, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Money doesn't make the world go around and money can't make you happy all by itself. There are some very rich, very unhappy people. But the fact that some have so little does make life much more difficult and also forces people to make choices they would never otherwise make, because in this world it does seem like you need money to survive. Yet people risk their survival to get that money. It's a pretty messed up system.

Don't Just Remember Them Love Them

Remember, remember
those who care about you
treat them as you would want to be treated,
as if you are worth more then everything.
But if you treat them differently
you will lose something precious and you will realize
when autumn begins with strong cruel winds
and when you fly in the sky with broken wounded wings
this is the right time to think and thank those who are
present
for you no matter if it is fall or spring and like a little
bird
who sings merry songs for you only for you.

-Girly, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Very poetic and an important yet very simple piece of advice: do unto others as you would have others do unto you. How many of us can say this is really true for our behavior? Not many unfortunately - but it's something to strive for.

He's Unforgettable

unforgettable
the way he walks
the way he speaks
we're compatible
yeah
let me elaborate
his height
i like
his style
drives me wild
his smile
umm
his smile
now that's my style
and his lips
i must kiss
i want to see him again
i just can't pretend
but he's gone now
so until i see him again
i gotta hold it down
r i p davon
i love you

-Nunu, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You're not the first and you won't be the last one to write a piece remembering Davon. Young Davon is someone many remember and still think on. But we agree that pretending is not what any of our readers or writers need - 'cause the truth will set you free! Davon's life style is why he is now deceased. Maybe he didn't feel he had any choice, but wouldn't you rather still hear his voice on your next phone call than remembering that he knew how to ball! Everybody dreads empty pockets and dusty clothes, but the worst thing on earth is dying before your time to go. Hold it down with everything you've got, but don't hold it down on the spot - 'cause that's what got him shot.

A Chance To Speak

If I had a chance to speak, I would tell the young homies that being locked up is a waste of your life. There are better things to do in life, like taking care of your parents, like they did for you when you were young. So, learn from what your parents teach you. Don't listen to homies, or people from the streets, because you will end up here, being locked up, and away from the people you really love.

-Lil' Drifter, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Sound advice 'Lil Drifter. Are you speaking from experience? Can you count on homies? Can you count on family to be there? We hope you'll soon be drifting home doing a successful program.

About Money

Money is my best friend. When I'm on the street, I make my money on the block. I spend all my time on the block, where time is money 'cause you get money fo' yo' time.

So if someone try to play with my money, it be a rap for that man or woman! 'Cause I work hard for my money! So I get mad and start playing with guns that shoot about fifty or a hundred times. And ninjas on my block, they play with money - I fight them! Then I steal something, like they' car. Then, when they get mad, we go to gun play.

So my money is a bad thing to play with, 'cause I'm sixteen years old and I live on my own. I got to buy everything I got! I mean, I still live with my mom in her house, but she say I'm too grown for her to have to buy me something. She know I be on the grind, too. So, all I'm saying is - you play with my money, you will die or you will cry, one. For example, a lil' ninja stole my bundle, and I made 'im sell me some rims, some twenty-two's; 'cause I know he like stealing cars, so I told him if he didn't have my rims "by tomorrow" - I was gon' shoot 'im. He paid. He had my rims by the next day.

I tell every ninja who borrow money fro me, I tell him, "I'm crazy! I get SSI [Social Security Insurance for the disabled]! So you play with my money, you in trouble! "

-Teenager, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We can see why you didn't print your name. And you're probably surprised to see this piece printed at all. Don't let it go to your head though, because we're publishing your piece as an example of just how wrong-headed the so-called logic of the grind will make you! We understand that it's not easy to make money for yourself at the age of sixteen, but making money like this on the grind will not only lock up your behind for a period of time - it will get you killed. Or maybe, with all your talk about gunplay, you'll kill someone else and spend the rest of your life in prison. A Beat writer just got 37 years to life for killing someone when he was only fourteen years old, so you know at sixteen the system will cut you no slack. What we're trying to say is that this talk seems to make sense when you're on the street hustling dope or whatever next to the next foolish young ninja strapped like you (or got it hid in one bush and his stash hid in another) - but both of you are headed to hell in a hand basket! You've got to find a way to break the spell, the self-hypnosis that has you thinking this life style is working for you. Look where you are now! How slick is that? And if you call this a temporary setback, think about how far a bullet in your chest or head will set you back. It's time to change your life style. You won't get that fast money with a part-time job, but find a legal hustle before you're the next victim of the mob. Yeah, that lil' ninja gave you rims, but the next one might be crazy enough to bang that thang! Then we'll see him in max writing pieces about how you threatened his life so he had to act. Rethink your life while you have this time-out to think, safe here on the inside. Change, cry or die.

Life Is Short

What it do Beat? This yo' ninja Shady.

I'm up in this unit right now trying to fight this case, trying get out you feel me? Man this gun case ain't coo', man.

To all you ninjas out there trying to run around so-called banged up and thumped up, man them lil' pistols ain't nothing. Check my record. I am facing hard time right now. I am in here for many guns. Man, put them lil thangs up y'all runnin' around with, 'cause it ain't cutting it.

I am on my way to CYA. I got to do some hard time. So y'all with them pistol charges y'all getting off lucky.

My words of advice: Stop the dumb shhh. Get yourself together right now 'cause if you get that CYA ride it's not going to be pretty. YA ain't fun, it ain't cool bra. Get your life together for real 'cause life is short and you gotta do something with your life. Don't let it go to waste. So please get it together 'cause I didn't listen and now I have to pay for it with four years and three months of my life. Now how much time are you doing? Please don't mess up get your life 'cause it's short. Signing out.

-Espinoza, 150 Crew

From The Beat: How in the world were you able to buy weapons? What kind of scumbag sold weapons like that to a teenager? What were you planning on doing with weapons like that? You are aware that weapons kill people and destroy lives? We're sorry you have to go to the Y, because no youngster should ever have to go to that place, but we have to ask: WHAT WERE YOU THINKING MAN? We hope when you get out, you'll be able to find the right path and not return to a life that seeks to destroy the lives of others. Wake the hell up and take your own advice and leave the negative lifestyle in the past!

Wishing The Best For The Jets

What's good with The Beat Within man? Me and my lil' homie was just reminiscing about Sunnysdale and how things changed. Everybody locked up and the young ninjas the only ninjas left. That's really holding it down ya dig. All the big homies in the feds, or dead, man. It's real ugly, B.

We was just talking about how all the girls we grew up with running around telling people, ah yeah, I did it to him. And yeah, I got a baby by him, but now I'm messing with his best friend. Lil' brah was tellin' that lil' girl to shut up and eat a happy meal, 'cause they be under 15 and up.

And we was also talking about all the ninjas that died in the madness. It's a lot of lil' ninjas dead over what the big homies left behind. But finally everybody comin' together to make this money, ya feel me?

But like I told lil' brah, when I touch down, I ain't gonna put him on with no dope, or no licks, like our big homies. I'ma put him on with a job, ya dig it? Ninjas gone help the block the right way so we can get these police, probation officers, judges, and public pretenders off our backs. And they gonna be mad 'cause people they think got drugs and guns on them, or in the house gonna have applications, resumes, work permits, and legal documents. So they can't mess with none of us. Yeah, imagine that?

-Grimey U2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Yes, our communities are very different from before and seem to be getting worse. However, the type of mindset that you have developed — with action behind it — can keep our communities from getting worse. It starts with one person thinking different, such as yourself, and then expressing those thoughts. There are people out there who feel and think the same way, and who can assist you in what you may want to accomplish. But obviously the work starts with ourselves. Hopefully others will see the change in you and be inspired by that. Make it happen because you can do it. Just believe in yourself and surround yourself with those who support your thoughts!

...wonder if my mom still cares.
I haven't seen her in a year.

Life

Life in here is like hell. I used to think my life was hard. Once I walked into juvie I realized that my life wasn't that hard compared to some of the people. The past few years of my life were the toughest I have ever experienced except when I was 7 and mom's boyfriend used to beat her and I couldn't do anything about it.

If I told some of the dudes in here the worst years of my life, they would consider those the best years of their lives. It's terrible not have the freedom I once had. Not being able to spend time with my family. Right about now doing my homework at home or being grounded in my room, or even sleeping on the streets (not that I do) would be way better than compared to this.

What I'm trying to say is that everyone takes what they have for granted and they don't know how good they had it until it's taken away.

-Will U3, SF/YGC

From the Beat: You can't compare people's pain, Will. Watching your mom get hit and nothing you could do is as painful a memory and experience as being the victim of the beatings themselves. But the point you are making is very true, so we want to know how you will how much you cherish what you have when you get out of here? What will you have to sacrifice to stay free?

Fairness

My name is Smith. I'm convicted of sexual battery and false imprisonment. Now tell me this. First it's that I am convicted of those crimes because the victim is a female. Is it fair to me that the police or anybody wanted to here my story, or even is it fair that I got convicted of sexual battery when I never touched the victim against her own will. It was actually her option to stay.

I been in Juvenile hall since Friday and since Friday I been thinking if I'm guilty then she is guilty and if she's free then I should be free. Now I never cried or even sneezed in here but it's steady eatin' me inside that I am locked up when she is out with her family or having fun with her friends.

My grandmother told me always look on the bright side of things. I feel in here there is no bright side, except fly guy Rosell. I never laughed until I met him, but other words fairness is sometimes not fair.

In here I can't say hi to my nephews everyday, in here I can't wake up with my smile and go out to breakfast, in here I can't record hit songs with my group. In other words I can't be myself in here, and I'm innocent of the crime I been convicted of.

-Smith, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We don't know what happened or why your story is so different from that girl's story. When you sit back and reflect on the situation, really think about what that girl was going through when she was with you, when you search your soul deep down inside, what does it tell you? Was she really with you willingly? Did she consent to have sex with you? Was it a positive experience for her? Did she try to leave at any point and did you or did you not coerce her to stay through words or actions? These are very, very serious charges. Has anything like this ever happened with any other girl? Is this the first time? You need to ask yourself all these questions, and if the answer comes back that maybe you did something wrong, you need to admit that and you need to seek help. We hope that you were wrongfully accused and that you would never do what you are accused of, but only you and she know the answer to that.

Fear

Fear is something everybody go through. When you fear something or someone you're smart. You're smart 'cause you know what that something or someone can do to you. So you look out for your best interest.

But being brave is smart too, 'cause you don't want everyone to punk you, 'cause that is what they will do. So when there comes a time in life where you have fear of something or be brave, choose the one that will save your life 'cause people no play no more. It 2007. So stay safe.

-Too Militant U3, SF/YGC

From the Beat: Yes, we all feel fear. Fear can be the thing that keeps you alive in some situations, and you're smart to feel it. But sometimes, relying on fear is not the smartest choice because trust is what will keep you alive in those situations. Our experience is if you prove yourself a person of trust, you will attract trustworthy people.

The Stress Box

I'm in the box wondering when the hell am I getting out and every night I'm stressed out. Every day I think about my girl, wondering what's she's up to thinking if she's thinking about me.

I also wonder if my mom still cares. I haven't seen her in a year. I wonder what she's been up to, hoping she feels the same way I do. I hope I get out of this stress box soon cause when I get out every things gonna be cool.

-Martin, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We're so sorry that your mom hasn't talked to you in so long. A mother should never abandon her child like that. But this is unfortunately not a perfect world. As for your girl, a year is a long separation for such a young couple. We know you're holding onto her because she feels like an anchor for you on the outs, but be ready for the best and the worst. Start thinking about what you can do once you do get out. It can be really lonely out there and unless you find your own anchor, things can go the wrong way again. You need to set your course and start steering towards that. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Don't be afraid to get involved with something. Don't return to the streets because it's all you know.

It Is Hard Being In Here

I am a juvenile detainee. It is hard being in here.
Your life is basically in control of someone else in here.

You don't have much freedom.

You have to look out for who is your enemy.
You would have to watch who you hanging and talking to,
'cause some can be gang members, and they think you is
one of them.

You are basically locked in your room with no freedom.

-Butter, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It sounds like you have to be really careful of what you do in there. Do you think you can use that same level of carefulness on the streets? This may possibly give you a better chance of not having to come back to the halls. Be in control of your life so others won't control it for you.

My Chance To Speak To Young People

Today I want to tell the young people something about life, about my life. And it's not a joke, so if you want to laugh, just don't read my stuff.

Por que - life is not a joke, and you only get one shot at it. If you miss, you're done. As for me, I am not one of the lucky ones. So think about it. It isn't a joke, being in here. Especialmente if you have a charge like mine.

-Uriel, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Considering what you are facing, (maybe you can create a new Beat piece explaining how you go to this point?) you are providing a good example to young folks. You've consistently urged them not to follow in your footsteps, and to take their lives seriously. And you are facing your challenges with your head up. We are hoping the best for you, Uriel, until then don't stop teaching us readers!

Hay Otras Cosas Más Importantes

Lo que yo creo es que con el dinero solo te buscas problemas porque cuando tu tienes dinero solo piensas en gastarlo, andar en fiesta, tomando y piensas que estas viviendo la vida loca. Lo que nomas estas haciendo es destruyendote tu vida. No solo el dinero lo es todo en la vida. Hay otra cosas que valen más como el amor de la madre. Eso es más valioso que todo el dinero del mundo entero.

Cuando tienes el amor de tu madre, lo tienes todo en la vida. No te faltaría nada que envidiar en tu vida. Ni dinero, ni riquezas porque nadie nace con el dinero. El dinero se hace trabajando.

From The Beat: Estas en lo cierto. Hay otras cosas más importante en la vida que el dinero. El amor de una madre es un gran ejemplo que tú no has dado. ¿Dino y tú estas cuidando lo más importante que tienes: Tu madre? Estamos de acuerdo que no es sano gastar el dinero de la manera positiva, pero también el dinero es muy importante siempre y cuando se usa de la manera adecuada. Hay que aprender a darle uso.

There Are Other Things More Important

What I believe is that with money, you're just looking for problems because when you have money, you only think about spending it, partying, drinking, and you think you are living the crazy life. The only thing that you are doing is destroying your life. Money is not everything in life. There are other things that are worth more like the love of a mother. That is more valuable than all the money in the entire world.

When you have the love of your mother, you have everything in life. You won't be missing anything to be envious for in your life. Not money or riches because no one is born with money. Money is made working for it.

-Donadi U6, SFYGC

From The Beat: You're right. In life, there are other things more important than money. The huge example that you gave us like the love of a mother is one of those things. Tell us: Are you taking care of the most important thing that you have: Your mother? We agree with you that it is not healthy to spend money in a positive manner, but at the same time, money is always very important when it is used in an adequate manner. You have to learn how to put it to use.

Lo Que Ya No Voy A Hacer

Si me gustaría cambiar mi vida porque en la vida que tengo no me trae nada bueno. He venido a la juvenil dos veces. Pase preso la Navidad y el Año Nuevo bien triste y preocupado por mi madre y mi hermana. El día que vuelva a salir de aqui voy a cambiar mi vida. No voy andar en malas pasos ni voy a vender más drogas porque a cada persona que le vendo le quito de comer a ellos y a sus hijos.

Voy asistir a la escuela para aprender a hablar Inglés e ir a mi país. Quiero agarrar mis papeles porque en la vida que ando miro que se me va a hacer difícil.

Espero que pongan esto en la revista que dan para que los demás lean mi mensaje y que Dios se los pague.

From The Beat: Estas en lo cierto. Cada droga que vendes, le quitas el dinero que una familia necesitas y aparte de eso estas destruyendo la vida a el quien la usa y a sus familia. La droga es una enfermedad que ha destruido a muchas gentes en este mundo. Las leyes migratorias estan muy duras. Hay deportaciones por cualquier tipo de problemas relacionado con la ley. No permitas que esto te pase a ti.

What I Am No Longer Going To Do

Yes, I would like to change my life because in the life that I have, it doesn't bring me any positive results. I have come to Juvenile two times. I spent Christmas and New Years locked up, very sad, and worried about my mother and my sister.

The day that I exit from this place again, I am going to change my life. I am not going to be in bad paths nor am I going to sell anymore drugs because every person that I sell to, I'm taking money that this person could use to fed his/herself and his/her children.

I am going to attend school so I could learn how to speak English and go to my country. I want to obtain my papers because in the life that I'm leading, I see that it is going to get difficult for me.

I hope that this gets published in the magazine that y'all give away so that the rest of the people locked up read my message and may God pay y'all back for it.

-Elvin U5, SFYGC

From The Beat: You are absolutely correct. Every drug that you sell, you are taking the money away from a family in need, and aside from that, you are destroying the life of the person who uses that drug, and the lives of that person's family. Drugs are an illness that has destroyed a lot of people in this world. The immigration laws are very harsh. There are deportations for any type of problem in regards with the law. Don't allow for this to happen to you.

Same Routine

locked up in this place
and nowhere to go
walls all around
and a bolted down door
can't escape

and no place to hide
this place got me mad
but no room to cry
time ain't flyin' by
and nothin's changed
wake up every morning
and everything the same

make your bed
fold your sheets
and the sound of james brown
done ripped me outta sleep

-Hollow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You describe the situation well. In and out of that cell they call your room; step out to the same routine, then get locked down again too soon. All this discipline is like a daily bitter pill, but if you can show more self-discipline when you're free — get yourself a legal j-o-b — off-work hours you can chill; no James Brown (RIP), no locked doors and no vast expanse of time to kill.

How Do You Know If God Is Real?

I came to believe that God is real because when my life was all messed up, I was robbing people, stealing, taking whatever I wanted and I was smoking. Then I started going to church with my mother, but I was still messing up. Not like I use to. Then I started reading the bible and I didn't understand what it was saying. One day I asked God to help me understand what he was trying to tell me. Smoking a blunt wasn't the same, I didn't need it.

My life is changing slowly. God was just changing my life and I never felt the same way since.

So you know if God's real when things seem bad, then all of a suddenly things just start to change.

-Son Of God, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's good that a way for you to slow down has been found. How long has it been since you've gotten to know and believe in God? Do you think there are some things you can also do, that will help you change? Will you continue to attend "church" with your mom once you get out? Maybe you have to do a little more in order to really change? Thank you for sharing.

CYA

stop
running
from
your
problems

-Tubby, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Why do people run to CYA? Yeah, for a lot of them, it's because they keep running from their problems instead of trying to solve them.

My life is changing slowly.

To My Mom And Sisters

i miss y'all very much
i want to come and spend time with y'all
i haven't been there for the past few years
i've missed the joyful and painful tears
so many years i lived my life with an awful fear
then my cousin started making money
for what it's worth he told me
i can't be tourin' in it
you got to be born in it
and also sworn in it

-Momo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Most often it's harder for those "born in it" to quit and go legit, because it means going against the beliefs and life styles of family members. However, there are almost always other family members there to support your quitting the game and making your money the legal way — so you can be out there free to stay!

Kiss

Point your lashes down
And you can picture my face
(I'm smiling)
Open your mouth
Speak with your heart
And you can see my soul
(I'm waiting)
Place your arms around my waist
And you embrace my uncertainty
(I'm shaking)
Place your lips against mine
And try to catch me
(I'm falling)

-Baby G, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Beautiful, tender, imaginative poem. We can feel your yearning, your loneliness. You always write straight from your heart. We hope whomever you wrote this for will catch you, but if he can't or won't, we hope you'll catch yourself. You're amazingly resilient and independent.

When I Get Out

When I get out I'm going to go to school and spend more time with my little brother, so he won't make the same mistakes I did. And I'm going to listen to my mom more often when I get out.

I'm going to get a job and I'm going to do all my work and get good grades. I'm not going to come back I been here four times and I realized this is not for me.

I hate it here. I'd rather be at home were I can eat when I want to and go where I want to. But now I gotta be in a room with four walls. I'm gone.

-Adante, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Role models are extremely important for young kids coming up. If you say, do as I say, not as I do — do you think your little brother will listen? Now, if you don't say anything at all and you just do, what do you think will happen? How do you think your brother will respond?

Don't Judge That Rose

Roses are red many things are blue
Like the tears we cry on valentine
We can't be what we won't be
On valentine at the movies
Sometimes we cry
But time will go by
To stop cryin'
Comin' back on valentine
We have and need to determine
The freedom of our mind
And race
No matter what color
Don't judge that rose
That comes in many beautiful colors
Like we love!

-Quez U2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: These are interesting thoughts. We like the idea of loving the rose in all its many colors. What brought about these thoughts in you? Are you speaking to anyone in general? No matter the differences, all things are beautiful in their own way. We can feel you on that.

I ain't comin' back to the Hall I'm staying out -- ya feel me

The Streets

They say it's murders, all through the streets
Could it be one week without us gettin' put six feet deep?
But they say is too weak, you say that you did it, but they
say that you speak,
These days they be fightin' but they shooting for keeps,
But some just don't listen and they know that you be
missing,
But you know that you living and you know you in prison,
Throwing away the key is like throwing away yo' life,
getting jumped in the streets to one on one fights,
Keep yo' head up and yo' life don't give it,
Giving a living an' be willing to live it,
But that's just life -- if you know you hear me
I ain't comin' back to the Hall I'm staying out -- ya feel me.

-Lil' T, 150 Crew

From The Beat: There's two kinds of prisons — the physical one that houses so many of America's best and brightest souls, and then the mental one that limits the options, shrinks the mind. It seems like in this poem you're hitting on both of them — the lock-down facilities you know so well, and then the lockdown mindset on the streets that's all about kill or be killed. It seems like your question here is the burning question of an endangered generation: "Could it be one week without us gettin' put six feet deep?" The answer to that depends, in part, on you. Are you ready to be part of answering that question?

Amanda

The most unforgettable person I ever met was when I was in 8th grade. Her name is Amanda and she is kind of crazy (so I think). I first met her in my science class when the D.A.R.E. program came in to teach us about drugs and she said, "I like drugs" (in a way that not only made everyone laugh, but also made everyone know she was joking). That was the beginning of a friendship.

Lots of times she would act just plain weird (like make fun of people's accents, what words they used, how they drew objects, etc.). It seemed that the only people she did not pick on were her friends.

She was a very funny person also. At the talent show she told a lot of stand-up comedy based on Carlos Mencia. In history class when we learned a bit about the Russian slave trade, she started asking about how it happens and everyone burst out laughing and one kid called out, "Control your mind."

It seemed that everywhere she went she found humor in stuff. An example is when a kid slipped while playing basketball and she cracked up.

To me she is so unforgettable that I use her name and her personality in my anime comics that I draw. I also use her name in the book that I am currently writing.

-Lavos

From The Beat: Wow, make sure you give us a copy of that book you are writing. And we'd love to see some of your anime, too. We don't exactly understand the example about the Russian slave trade, but Amanda does seem like a person with a great sense of humor. No wonder you picked her as an unforgettable character. Do you ever wonder where she is right now?

Here I stand as a dysfunctional man
Belly-raised by a dysfunctional fam
Sometimes I wonder why I never
follow my heart
Demons pullin' at my soul till it's
ripped apart

Time — The Most Valuable Thing

Time is the most important thing in the world to me, but only after family. Money is important, but without time, there is no way to make money. Time is the most valuable thing in the world, and it shouldn't just be wasted on anything like we would waste our money.

The time we're in here is a waste. Some would actually change after getting out, but instead they get extra time. We could've been out there making our money or using our time wisely to help out our family who really love us and got our back no matter what — and we could have been helping ourselves. Our time in here, it's a waste.

-Edgardo

From The Beat: If time is important to you, Edgardo, what are you doing with the time in your hands right now? The system might be holding you, but you have control of what you make out of your time. And if you use it to plan for a future that keeps you free and moves you forward, if you use it to educate yourself, then it is not being wasted.

Sometimes

Sometimes I wonder what this life's about
Sometimes I wonder why I chose this route
Sometimes I wonder why the lights are out
Sometimes I wonder why I poison the body and minds of people for the clout

Here I stand as a dysfunctional man
Belly-raised by a dysfunctional fam
Sometimes I wonder why I never follow my heart
Demons pullin' at my soul till it's ripped apart
Sometimes I wonder why we live and die by the gun
Sometimes I feel it's impossible to do right, like landing on the sun
Sometimes the streets is under pressure and guns erupt
Sometimes I wonder why you turn your back for a second, and realize your times up...

-Yung Cutt-e

From The Beat: Well, your time is not up yet, you still have a long way to go. You can start following your heart because we know your heart is stronger than those demons. Do it for your loved one who would rather have in their lives and not just the memory of you, or just do it for yourself. Do you control your destiny, or are you merely a passenger on a ship with no control at all? It's clear that you have both a brain and the skills to use it. Don't wait.

Time Or Money

Time or money? It seem like money can be a lot. It could if you use it right. Money can get you in good positions or bad ones.

If it's me, I am gonna take both and work the hell out of them until I am satisfied with both. What I mean by that is with my money I work my time by havin' fun with both. Then at the same time, get money, workin' it, time and money.

Workin' it... see wit' time and money, they both depend on each other, money and time. If I was in a bad situation, I would depend on my money to work my time. Then my time some way, somehow got to work my money so I would never run empty. Like money run out, think, think, what you gonna do wit' yo' time?

-Pooter-V

From The Beat: What if you only have one? For instance, you have no money where you are, so are you working the time you have on your hands right now? If you run out of time, what good is money?

Time And Money

Time is money and money is time. If you don't have time, you don't have patience so that you can make money.

-Gg

From The Beat: Well, Gg, you have time right now, but no money. So what are you going to do with the time you have that could help you make money in the future?

Time More Than Money

If I could pick time or money I'd pick time, but it's a hard choice. I'd pick time because the time I spend with my mom means more to me than anything else in the world, including money.

But at the same time, I have no money, and without money, we can't survive. So its mutual.

-Angelita

From The Beat: We appreciate your value system. You recognize that the true treasures in life are family, and spending time with family. There are very rich people who are unhappy, and very poor people that are satisfied. (Of course, there are also plenty of happy rich people and unhappy poor people, too.) It's all in what you value.

When I Die

When I die I want to be remembered as a down homie that was always down for the barrio. Always taking care of the lil' homies, taking them under wings and showing them wassup. A cholo that was usually quiet but when I would speak I would spit game and knowledge to those worthy of receiving. A vato that took care of his familia and homeboys. Someone that actually cared for this shhh. So when I die I'll be remembered as that down homie from the barrio.

-Spooky

From The Beat: What about your parents? What do you want them to remember you as? A lost son? All we can hope for is that you mature in time to realize where this road leads, so you don't end up another child victim of the streets. Today we received a powerful piece from a youngster who, when he was in the halls, wrote exactly what you now write. But today, he is in the hole in a state prison realizing — too late — that it was all a setup, all a bunch of words that led him down a path to self-destruction. Now he knows. Now he understands. Now he is no longer a child thinking like a child. And now it is too late.

Love And Hate

It all started with the lack of affection
After a while she had me on close inspection
Why do girls think we be foolin' around?
When I say "I LOVE YOU" it is as it sounds
It seems what I give you ain't even enough
You wanna argue and act like you tough
The love that we share is one of a kind
True love is one thing that is hard to find

Why do people argue with their love
So compatible you fit like a glove
Seem to get closer the more we fight
Don't get mad, it'll be all right
Argue by day, love by night

Do you believe in love at first sight
I was just to involved in my daily grind
Had only a little time for you in my mind
Sometimes I didn't see you for a day
You wondering where I went and damn my ways

Girl, our relationship didn't last
Wish it was different, can't change the past
When you wrote me you asked for another chance
Our love was cool, full of romance
And those fights were always so bad
But I can't handle it, to share the love we had

There's a thin line between love and hate
If you had both sides you can relate

-Clarence The Twin

From The Beat: Love is painful, yet we all choose to love even though it hurts. Could it be that "cheating" has more than one meaning, Twin? Maybe you didn't cheat on her with another girl, but it's clear that you often chose to put other things ahead of her (the streets, your boys, crime), and those choices led to your forced separation. Isn't that a kind of cheating, too? Isn't this the reason your relationship didn't last?

Get Your Mind Right

Move fast like the wind
Glide slow like the bird
Must survive till the end
Don't end up on the curb
Be respectful with no attitude

Have potentials and accomplishments
Do the right not the opposite
Don't let your brain go to waste
Have a life with good taste

It's easy to say but harder to do
It's not up to no one but you
So make the right choice and be wise
When the day comes you'll be surprised

Like me, I'm doing my best
To enjoy my time by writing this rhyme
And get this stress off my chest
Everybody has hard times from day to night

But just stay strong and keep ya mind right,
Gone.

-Clarence The Twin

From The Beat: Thanks for the wonderful rhyme Clarence. You're far from gone! You're right here and present! Keep it up.

I'm Sorry

I tried to front like I didn't care
I acted stupid like shhh wasn't fair
Mom, I'm sorry I made you quit
All those tantrums and thrown fits
Times I said I hate you
Mom, I'm sorry it wasn't true

But all I wanted was the best for me
Spent all the time and money
I messed up, yeah, I know

I went away to grow
Three years gone, I finally know
How much you really mean to me
So for all the times I made you worry...
The least I can say is that I'm sorry.

-Clarence The Twin

From The Beat: We hope your mother will be able to read this, Clarence. It is sad, yet we know it is coming from your heart. We can feel the sincerity in the words. We know you mother will accept your apology. But an apology of words alone is, indeed, the "least" you can do. The "most" is not said in words, but in deeds. And, perhaps as important as this apology to your mother is, the one you owe yourself is even more important.

Unique

When I get scared
People say I have a blank stare
When I act sad
People act like they don't care

When I get recognition
People say it's not fair
When I act like I'm supposed to
People call me a square

When I get a trim
People make jokes of my hair
When I conquer my obstacles
People look through me as if I'm air

But I'm going to remain the same
And I'm not changing my persona or what I wear
Because when people get to know me
They say I'm very rare

-Clarence The Twin

From The Beat: Which means unique, which you are Clarence. You have a way of putting your thoughts into words that capture the attention of your reader. We hope you will use this talent of yours to the fullest. It is important to know how people perceive you and what they say about and to you, but in the end, there's only one person who's opinion counts, and we both know who that person is...

My Thinking Number One

Today, I sit and stare out of my window into the blank sky which seems to be at peace. Mentally, I'm rehabilitated, but in reality the staff and many other doesn't think so. No letter from my mother. I'm starting to think she has forgot about me as she did last time I was here. I try to fight that thought out of my mind, but my emotional state is getting harder to ignore.

We went on a movement the other day... boy was I happy. As the days get marked off my calendar, I grow weary about what my life will be like once I'm back into society.

Haven't heard from my girlfriend since the last time I was in the real world. I worry sometimes that she had left me to be with someone new. For some odd reason, I think she has ventured off back to her old boyfriend and can't find the heart to tell me. Speaking of her, I wonder what's she doing right now... hopefully clouding her mind with thoughts of me.

Pressure continues to compress my thoughts when tryin' to write lyrics for my new song, so I've decided to give music a rest. I got a letter today.

It was from my aunt and two of my friends, which is surprising. Oooh, I got a few pictures too. That's good. As I look out of my little window I'm able to see a beautiful sunset taking place.

"Get down, Code 3!" Everybody get down. One of the staff yells. Ah shhh, somebody got into a fight. Can't see exactly what's happening, but by the constant yelling it automatically tell me it's not good...
(to be continued)

-Clarence the Twin

From The Beat: One of the things that makes us sad when we read your writing, Clarence, is just how much potential we see in you, just how much you have to teach, and just how gifted you are. Why does that make us sad? Because the circumstances of your life have made it so hard for those gifts to be expressed in a positive way, even when that is what you want. We know your mother loves you, whether she is able to express it the way you want her to or not. She, too, has had to deal with circumstances that have left her in situations that no one should have to be in, and she too deserves our understanding. We know she has not abandoned you, even though it must feel like that from time to time. It occurs to us that she needs you even more than you need her, and that your growing maturity and intellectual gifts may be what can pull you both out of the trough you find yourself in. We look forward to everything you write because it not only opens up a window into a world we seldom see, it challenges us to think. Don't give up. Don't let the snapshot of today lead you to conclude that tomorrow's picture will be the same. You are maturing in thought and in deed, even as you sit in this place, and we look forward to more of your thoughts on paper. We also look forward to what you will be able to achieve, both for yourself and your family, as well as for the rest of us, when you are once again a free man.

True Friendship

I'm sittin' here thinking 'bout the past
Hoping in future our friendship will last
We have been friends for a short period of time
And been through a lot, even so we're just fine.

I've seen lots of people come and go
Saying and doing whatever - careless, you know.

That's why your friendship means so much to me.
When I'm with you, I feel secure whole, and so free.

Free from those who won't be around
When times get tough, and I'm down
You'll be there for me and understand how I feel.
Because we both know our friendship is real.

-Clarence The Twin

From The Beat: A true friendship is hard to find, so continue to cherish it, Clarence. We don't know who you are addressing in this poem, but we'd be willing to be that this person feels as lucky to have you in his/her life as you feel to have him — or her — in yours.

When I get recognition
People say it's not fair
When I act like I'm supposed to
People call me a square

Confused

I find myself stuck in this place, not knowing what to do,
confused and not knowing where my life is headed.

I feel like I'm a lost soul just flying around not knowing anything.

It's funny 'cause I know what's good for me and I have good morals,

but in my head there's just no hope, no nothing. I'm stuck.

-Lil' Cesar

From The Beat: Lil' Cesar, you are not stuck and there is still hope — and anyone who can write what you have written can never say that there's nothing in his head. There's plenty in your head! You know what you want, because you know what's good for you. You just haven't had the courage to break out of old habits (that your peers want you to continue) and try those new things that you know will bring you a better future. It's not easy to stand up and be your own man, but nothing worth having is easy. Be brave, and do the right thing for yourself.

I Want To Change

I wanna change my whole life. I wanna change my life because my old life just ain't working for me. I do the same thing and I expect the consequence to change, but it doesn't. I'm tired of that and I'm ready to change for the better.

Being locked up is getting old and tiring. My mentality has changed and so have my choices. I'm a changed man!

-Smokey

From The Beat: You definitely sound like a changed man. Of course, it's easier to say what you plan to do when you're here, then to actually do it when you're free to make your own choices again, so we truly hope you're sick and tired of this place. We know we would be. Those changes you experiencing — if you allow them to continue — will bring some consequences that will surprise and please you, and those that love you, too.

Make somethin'
from nothin'
is the game,
Our hunger for
money is what we
try to tame

I Pray To God

I pray to God to
Show me the way
But if He should not
Please forgive me for
Being lost.

-Steady

From The Beat: It is okay to feel lost sometimes, we all do. The important thing, even you feel this way, is to respect what God has created, and that means to respect all living things, including those you have hurt in the past. If you feel lost, ask those around you for directions, and be honest when you pray to God for help.

It's funny 'cause I
know what's good for
me and I have good
morals,
but in my head there's
just no hope, no
nothing. I'm stuck.

The Game

Some play games to get a
prize or first place,
Some play games to earn
respect and space,
But the game we play leaves
no one standin',

Watch ya back because
that's where bullets might be
landin',

Make somethin' from nothin'
is the game,

Our hunger for money is
what we try to tame,

Legal, illegal scams and
plans set out,

All day tryna follow through
during droughts,

Game or no game we
mouthpiece the streets,
Manipulatin' the flow of life
and how we eat.

-Vago

From The Beat: You can easily use that mouthpiece and get yourself somewhere in the community. The game most people are playing right now, the one you describe as making something from nothing, almost always ends in nothing. A few years ago, there was a movie called "War Games" in which a giant computer figured out all the possibilities of how a nuclear war would end, and the only conclusion it reached was that the only way to win was not to play the game in the first place.

Change? ...Never!

It's the choices that I make, that makes me who I am,
The risks that I take, that y'all won't understand.
They may think I'm a mistake, but I consider myself a man,
You don't have to like me, just know my bullets always land.
Disrespect to me is just not going to stand,
I won't let it go or say "talk to the hand."
I'm a handle the business, that's why I am who I am.
Another person likes at the beach, just a grain in the sand.

-Cortizzle

From The Beat: What is your definition of a man, Cortizzle? Someone who's wearing the next boy's underwear? Someone who "handles his business" and yet doesn't even think about the consequences? It might be true that the things you do make you who you are, but the things you decide to do also have consequences, and the way it's looking right now, they aren't looking much in your favor. Change? Of course you will. Everything changes all the time. You are getting older whether you want to be or not. You can't declare: "My body won't change!" It will. You can't declare: "My mind won't change!" It will. Even in death we change. Change is inevitable. The only question is, will you direct that change, or will you allow others to direct it for you?

Footprints For The Future

This time we call life is so powerful, time for us to leave a print, or names until the end of time of life. To be remembered as a hero or an inspiration to how life is lived. Powerful time to leave a powerful mark.

-Beenz

From The Beat: In fact, Beenz, this life is the ONLY time to leave a mark for those who follow. The only question is, what is the mark you plan to leave?

Just Keep Doing What I'm Doing

Would you rather change your life or keep it the same? To me I would rather keep my same life and keep doing the same thing I'm doing. The reason why is because I love doing the things I do.

But at the same time, I am going to change, but not all the way. I'm going to do things smart, get more education, plus get myself a legit job and make my mom happy. But I'm still going to be the same person.

-Lil' Man

From The Beat: Yeah, you can stop will stop! (We took that cliché out of your piece.) The only question is whether you will stop on your own, or you will be stopped by the system that now holds you as its prisoner. You say you love doing the things you do, so we have to conclude that you love wearing another boy's underwear, you love being told when to speak and when to be silent, you love to be locked into your room, you love to eat food that you wouldn't eat at home, you love to shower with a bunch of boys, and you love to let strangers dictate your every move, because that is what you are doing. Is that what you love? When you say you are going to change but keep doing the same thing you were doing, what do you mean? Do you really think you can just change a little bit and keep doing the same thing you were doing without facing the same consequences? Think again. And we know you are capable of thinking, because you have said you want to get your education and a legit job. That tells us what changes you are capable of. The rest tells us that you need to do some more thinking!

This My Life

Pulling all nighters, doing bad in school, committing crimes, getting locked up over and over, gangbanging, no food... Sorry mom and dad, it ain't your fault I'm like this, it's just the life I chose, Y'all was good to me.

-Spooky

From The Beat: So, you choose the streets and your homeboys over your mom and dad, and you think "sorry" is enough? We think "you want to have your cake and eat it, too," meaning you don't want to give your parents the one thing all parents want for their children, and at the same time you want to tell them you love them and that they did all right by you. You can't have it both ways, ML Spooky. If you really are sorry, it's your actions and not your words that show it. If you continue making the same choices, then you can't really be sorry. It's hard to be that honest with yourself, but we're just keeping it real.

Lord, Hear My Prayers

I can admit at the time it was all fun,
 But when I look back at what I've done,
 It wasn't right to have taken what was not mine,
 So I'll leave it at that,
 'Cause my time is still ticking
 My life is still passing;
 But before this ends
 On my mind there's conflict within.
 That is why I'm starting to realize as each day goes by
 My life's course changes
 Like leaves in a stream, it's always turning
 So when I ask you
 What if the world is to come to an end?
 ...Yeah life is a risk!
 We've made our streets war zones
 We have fought our own neighbors
 And we've caused many deaths of our own
 Brothers and sisters.
 Life is short, give it a rest.
 I think we need to change the way we live
 And do something positive,
 So the future can continue on at its best
 The end is not far,
 So I hope I've changed!
 So let's stop it all here today
 For this is all, all of what I
 Pray!

-Young Bugs

From The Beat: Young Bugs, this is a very nice flow, and a very fine prayer. This flow shows a different side of you, a side that is mature, a side that is in the progress of changing. We hope you continue with this prayer and follow the road that takes you to a better future.

And we've caused many deaths of our own
 Brothers and sisters.
 Life is short, give it a rest.

Time or Money: It Depends

To me it depends where I am. If I'm on the outs, money is more important than time. Time is still important because without time there's no chance to make money. Money is more important on the outs because you need it to survive. But when I'm in here time is more important because that's all I have, I have no money in here so it's not that important right now.

-Steve

From The Beat: You may need money to survive (though many in the world struggle through without it), but without time there can be no survival. So are you going to do anything with the time in your hands right now to make the best of a bad situation? Time always keeps moving forward, and once gone, can never be regained. Money, on the other hand, can be lost and found and lost and regained a hundred times.

Growing Up

I would love to change my life because I have gone through the unimaginable, and my future is gonna be bad till I'm 18. I'm on probation, and social services, so too much control over my life by other people.

But at the same time, if I wouldn't have gone through all of it, I wouldn't be as strong as I am today. I am in the process of changing my life (for the long run) right now. I'm growing up little by little.

-Angelita

From The Beat: Yes, it sounds very much like you're growing up. This is a mature piece of writing. We're sorry that strangers have so much control over your life right now, but what makes this a mature piece is your understanding the person who has the most control over your future is you. Change is a process, not a product, so take it one step at a time. Once you've committed yourself to the changes you want to bring about, that process has already begun.

My Word – My Life: Changed Man

For me, some part of my life has change when I came in and some didn't. The part of my life that has changed was all da stuff I've done on the out, wit' my clique.

The other part of my of my life was good and it was on the out — church boy. That's the life I did not let it go wen I came into Hillcrest. Everything I've done with my life was some bad, some good and I don't know how to explain it. Only God could.

-TI

From The Beat: So how have you changed the bad stuff? How does "Church Boi" justify the bad stuff TI has done? We know you are in a bad situation right now, and that it takes this time to really think about the things that have happened in your life, and the things you want to happen in your life. When you think about that, how do you plan to get there from here?

Change

They got me locked up in a box with windows and doors

I could see fresh air, but can't hear no noise
 If I could run it back, to how it was in tha day
 I'd take back things that I did, and don't say words
 that I'd say

But it is what it is now
 Tryin' to find tha only answer to my question...
 how?

How do I turn my life around?
 When I'm in an environment where I hear tha same
 sound

Patnahs on the block tryna make that money
 Holdin' guns on tha block, ain't nothing funny
 When I'm tryna get that good, my boy got shot on
 the corner that he stood
 I'm a champ, I'm a thoroughbred, tha last of a dying
 breed

Thoughts embedded in my head, just like a planted
 seed

Sorry for my sins, I am indeed
 So when I get out, I'ma talk to God and make a plea
 God, please forgive me for what I've done
 I'll do anything to keep the title as your son
 So till the end comes near,
 please don't ever turn ya back and guarantee you'll
 always be near.

-Mikhael

From The Beat: Change never comes easy, and always takes time. But wishing for change — praying for change — is the beginning of change. Can you do anything to change the environment that surrounds you? In addition to asking God for help, don't be afraid to ask others for help. You are clearly someone who can think, and can reason, and get write. Those are qualities not everyone is blessed with, so use them wisely. And take it one step at a time.

If I could run it back, to how it
 was in tha day
 I'd take back things that I did,
 and don't say words that I'd
 say

Back Again

Here I am again right back in the place I fear the most
 Fear not of the violent kids, or the Code Three's
 Nor the shady staff, or the nasty old food
 But fear the most of losing my life to time
 Behind these high walls and thick glass
 Everything from the county drawe's to the flat Bob Barkers
 I hate it!
 Three white walls, one door, one toilet, one sink
 One bed, one desk, one window
 With an ugly-ass view
 Hour after hour of being told what to do,
 I'm only seventeen! I did what I had to do!
 Remorse is what they wish to see
 But if it is given my privileges will be lessened, maybe ROP
 When they're tryna send me to CYA
 Days go by, day by day

When I think about how my life would be if I was given one more chance
 So if it is a lot to ask please before you go to sleep pray for my release

-Young Bugs

From The Beat: Young Bugs, why should we pray for your release if, as you make very clear, you had your release and you didn't respect it, you didn't keep it? What will make this time different? Of course we don't want you to go to CYA because we don't think that a place that any child belongs, but how are those who make the decisions about your future to judge what you will do if not to look back at what you did before? We're sure you've made these promises before. We're sure you hated it here before. We're sure you said never again before. But here you are! What do you need to keep you free? Could it be that god is answering your prayers (which are made more through actions than through words) by putting you here? If you only did "what you had to do," then what will prevent you from having to do it again? We hope you will get that chance you want, and we hope you will cherish it and not come back to the halls again. The Beat will pray for you not just to get out, but to find a way to stay out.

Money Over Time

I guess money is more important to me than anything else. It doesn't matter where you're at. I'm locked up and I'm thinking about how I'm going to double the money I have at the house. So it don't matter where your at, time is important, too, but money is always going to be on top in my eyes.

-Derek

From The Beat: From what you have said, Derek, it seems like you are already planning to be back in the halls once you get out, or did we get the meaning of your piece wrong? Also, there are things in this world money cannot buy, and one of those things is freedom. The old saying "You can't take it with you" is absolutely true. As time runs out (which it does for all of us), money fades to insignificance,

Funny People

The most unforgettable character I ever met is Steven and Rags. They be havin' me crackin' up in here. They should have their own show. Most of the time, Steven be getting' on Rags, but we all coo'. They won't fight over it, it's just a joke.

Ragz be doin' some funny things, too. I gotta give him his props. I think without the both of them, my time would be harder here. Both of them are funny and they are unforgettable characters. You can't forget people like that.

-Pac-B

From The Beat: We wish you had given us an example or two of their "routines" so we could laugh too. The Beat can always use a good laugh, and we know how important it is to be able to laugh when you're not free. So props to both of them.

What Is Love

Love is when two people love and need each other
 Love is when two people respect and look out for each other
 Love is when two people adore, search for each other
 Love is not when two people disrespect each other
 Love is not good when they're jealous
 Love is not good without the other half of their partner
 But love is not good until you tell the other person
 I Love You

-Maniak

From The Beat: And it sounds like someone is in love right now. Do you have someone in mind/in heart? Have you told her? What does she say about it?

Wasting Life

Chilling in my cell killing life. That's all we doing here is killing our lives. This ain't helping us change. This is just a place where they keep us for a while, so it gives us time to plot our next crime and think about who we gonna add to our hit list. The time is just killing off our lives. So the system in a way is killing us slowly.

-Spooky

From The Beat: It seems to us the person you're adding to your hit list is yourself! If this isn't helping you become a "better citizen" (and we don't disagree with you about that), our question is: Do you want to become a better citizen? Unless you're looking for that help, it doesn't matter what the system provides or doesn't provide. Change begins with you, and your desire for it. We don't see that desire in what you've written, so tell us, what do you look for to help you change, and what is the change you want? If all you're doing with your time is plotting your next crime, where do you think you'll be in 5, 10, or maybe even 20 years?

Just Bounce

Why we do the crime if we don't like to do the time?
 Why do we mess up, if we don't like to be locked up?
 We always wanna be in the 'hood, but we always up to no good.
 We just wanna smoke and get drunk. And then we get into some funk.
 So next time when they ask you if you wanna rob somebody for an ounce, you should just bounce.
 And then ask yourself was it worth it?

-Lil O

From The Beat: Good advice Lil' O. We hope you will remember what you said here, and follow you own advise. We hope not to see you again in the halls.

I Would Change

I would change my life because I don't like the way it's going. I would also like to change it because I want a better future. I would change the gangbanging, because I don't want to end up dead or in jail for my whole life.

-David

From The Beat: The beginning of change is wanting it to happen, David, so you have already started a process. Where it ends is up to you. Do you have a plan? How will you say no to homies who want you to do things that can only undermine your desire to change?

I Plan

I plan to break bread like Jesus for all the right reasons
 The life I lead will leave your eyes bleeding.

-Lil' Smiley

From The Beat: We're sure you meant something important by these two lines, Lil' Smiley, but without more explanation, nobody will understand what you mean except you. When you write, it is the explanation that makes the piece. What are "all the right reasons" that Jesus broke bread, and how do you plan to follow His example? What do you mean that your life will leave our eyes bleeding? That doesn't sound like something we would want to happen, so what were you trying to say?

Everything from the
 county drawe's to the
 flat Bob Barkers
 I hate it!

Chance To Change

If I would have a chance to change my life I would do it. Even though it's hard because people already know how I am. I want to change.

-Luis

From The Beat: You always have a chance to change. You can start by changing as you are sitting in Hillcrest. What do you want to change? What do you have to do to make the change come true?

Silent

I want to change my life. The way that I want to change my life is by wishing that I could've changed that one year that changed my style, the style that changed the way of staying alive in this world of struggle and violence between different barrios.

Mainly, I decided to change my life because life was a struggle for me in this land of trouble, and because walking in this world all alone with no one's love made me realize a lot of things. It made me realize the way I was acting on the outs.

-Eriberto

From The Beat: Eriberto, you can't change the past and take back the things you all have already done. However, you can start as of this minute, doing things differently. You can start by changing a little at a time. Sometimes a little change does make a big difference in your life and also in those that love you.

The time is just killing off our lives.
 So the system in a way is killing us slowly.

When I Get Out

When I get out of the halls I am going to do the same thing I was doing before I got locked up for the simple fact that I can't change, I got that mentality. I'm forever on one.

-Young Profit

From The Beat: Well, only you know what it will take for you to change, maybe a longer stint locked up? Maybe something worse? What ever the case, only you and you alone will know when the time is right, and maybe you'll never get that chance to change, because, well, it will be too late.

Cuba And PBSP

If I could go anywhere I would want to go to Cuba to visit my great-great-grandmother and to Pelican Bay (State Prison) to visit my brother.

-Sisco

From The Beat: We hope this willingness to visit your great-great grandmother and brother comes true. Best of luck on getting out of the system and staying free!

Long To Go To The Bahamas

I place I never seen before but is long to go is the Bahamas. That is the place that I dream of going to when I become rich enough to buy a plane ticket and take all of my money down to that island and never look back. It seems like that is the one place that I can go to feel relaxed and happy. That island seems to be a big part of my dreams and that is the place I long to go.

-Lil' L

From The Beat: What will happen in the Bahamas? What will you do for work? Will you miss your family? What is it that attracts you to the Bahamas?

No Change

I don't wanna change nothing in my life. If I could take and go back and change something, it would be me kickin' it with some fake people and some tricks that they are, but this whole world is all screwed up. The streets are full with drugs, full with guns, full with gangs, and I love it.

This is where I belong and I grew up in this life, so I just live it 'till I drop. Some ninjas don't be about their word. They be some two-faces. Forget that; I'm real. I'll never talk behind a ninja's back. That's some old trick shhh, but if you ask me, I'm on some type of style like, "I don't give a damn" type of mess. If you ask me, screw the world.

-Lil' Creeper

From The Beat: Living life in the fast lane, sooner or later, you're going to crash. You know, there's more to this world than what you have grown-up seeing. Being involved with drugs, guns, and gangs is a dangerous mixture that only leads you to where you are right now, in a hospital bed, or six feet under Earth. Do you want to live to be a grandparent? If your answer is "yes," you better change now before it's too late. If your answer is "no," homie, you have a problem because that should be everyone's goal and may God have mercy on you.

My Mom

The most unforgettable character in my life is mom, 'cause she been there for me since day one. Ever since I was up here in the hall.

-D'marcus

From The Beat: Do you tell your mom how much you appreciate her being there for you? You're a lucky person to have such unconditional support, but don't you think it's straight selfish on your part to put her through this experience more than once? Handle your business!

I Know

I know you care
I can see it in your eyes.

I know you love me
you so often tell me.

You must know that it's hard
to express all the tender emotion

I feel in my heart for you.

It's there everyday and every night

Every second of the hour, everyday of the year,
and in the years to come

I pray that we will always mean this much to each other.

-Fly Kid

From The Beat: Only time will tell what the future holds for you and the one you write about. Our one big suggestion to you, get your self out of the predicament you are in, correct the problems that keep you down and handle your business legitly!

Hall Business

What's up with it, Beat Within! How you been? Me, the same old Lil' Creeper, keeping it solid, and staying true to the game like we all should.

Man, this Hall business be hella boring. You do the same old stuff and you be around these fake counselors that don't know what they be talking about. They don't know the real world that we live in, and on the top of all things, there be some hella fake people in the Hall. This stuff is nothing.

I just look out for the real homies, just keeping it solid and open-minded, you feel me? But, being up in here, I'm missing hella stuff in the 'hood where I'm from. We do it big everyday. Bump the police, you feel me? This ya' boy, Lil' Creeper and I'm out.

-Lil' Creeper

From The Beat: If you find being in Juvenile Hall boring, the answer is simple: Stop doing the kind of things that will bring you in here so you have to feel bored! Unfortunately, based on what you mention in your piece, it appears to us that you should start getting comfortable with your surroundings because you plan on going back to your old ways. Two plus two will always equal four and if you continue doing things like being on the block, you're always going to find yourself in trouble.

My Life

I wouldn't change shhh about my life or change my lifestyle. Why? 'Cause that's my first love, them Hayward streets. Everything about it is me. Nobody knows my neighborhood like I do. I can walk around that mutha with a blindfold and never get lost. My life consists of loyalty, money, respect, and something that's known in every ghetto of the world: Struggle.

-Lil' Juanito

From The Beat: Lil' Juanito, "them Hayward streets" where there before you were born and will be there when you're long gone. You think those streets give a nickel about you? What have the streets done for you besides get you in trouble? You might think they have provided you with a lot of good moments, but it's only brought you one step closer to walking over the edge to your downfall. Tell us more about your struggles. We are listening.

The Most Unforgettable Character...

The most unforgettable character I've ever met was this ninja I used to go to school with. We was cool until he started snitching. That messed me up because all the time I knew him, I ain't think he was gon' go out like that, but now I see that he faked a good game, but on the under, he was really a character who did some ol' trick stuff that I ain't never gone forget.

-Ray Ray

From The Beat: We're sorry to hear that this person turned his back on you. Did his actions cause you to think longer and harder about letting someone into your world? Did this person ever explain to you why he did what he did? Regardless, we'll assume the both of you were living a life doing illegal activities, and in truth, when a number of people start doing dirt, there is always one who will talk, or as you say snitch.

One More Chance

I wish I had one more chance to kick it with all my dead homies. But now it will be a long way to kick it again. RIP homies.

-Lil' T

From the Beat: And if you has the chance to kick it with the dead homies, what do you think they would say to you? Hopefully they would lace you on living a better life free of drama.

Up At Night

The thoughts that keep me up at night are thinking of home. My girl, when I kick it, money, when I get money, when I'm stunting, when I'm riding around in my car with a pocket full of hundreds, got weed, dranks, girl to the side, all of these things keep me up at night.

I also be thinking about I only got one life to live and I choose to live in the fast lane. I don't think that's the ways I want to live my life. I be thinking about all this stuff before I go to sleep. But the most important thing that keeps me up at night is all the money I had and riding around having hella fun. Well I got to go now.

Peace.

-Zuko

From The Beat: Makes sense, that the life we live is what we think about late at time, and we suppose wondering how it is going to be once we return. WE hope yo uare strong enough to make positive change in your life. Start with attending school! Start by following probation!

When I Get Out

When I get out I'm going back to school.

When I get out I am going to say sorry to my mom. When I get out I am going to be with my boys who know more.

When I get out I'm gonna get a job. The End.

-Ye-Ree

From The Beat: Well chilling with the wrong boys will only bring further problems in your life. Think before you react. Leave the drama and move on! It can be done.

In the Game

I would rather stay in the game, because everything happens for a reason — and you're not supposed to have any regrets. Regrets are weak.

If I wouldn't've did the things I did, I wouldn't be who I am. I wouldn't have the respect I got or know the people I know if my life wasn't the way I am. I love my life. Forget changing! Change the President! I'm the baby of the click.

-Momo

From The Beat: No diss, but you write like the baby of the click, and we wish some of those OG's who've been to prison would tell you to quit. All that tough talk will just take you to a tough place. Don't you know you don't regret your mistakes any longer only after you've learned your lesson and turned your life into a blessing not a curse. But you're not ready to hear these words.

Untitled

Man what's up Beat this Lil' Twone from Oakland just trying to get out of here. I been in here for like eleven days but I'm getting out soon..

I'm up in here for some other shh but it's good though, I'm going to be my own grown man.

Shhh, but I'm go do my EM or Home Supervision, but it's good though, I'm getting out

-Lil' Twone

From The Beat: We hope you come up with a way to get out and stay out... There is nothing good about being locked up and having charges. What's your plan?

My Girl

I'm trying to be cool, thinking about the day you left me
stuck in my heart
crack,
no blood going threw
dead in the brain and mad going insane.
Reminiscing on the day we had and the day we was mad and sad.
That day we was happy
it was the best day of our life.
I will never forget that you are gone but you are still in my heart.
I love you baby and no one can take that away from me.
I'm not going to cry because I'm too strong for that.
I might put my head down some time.
I got to be strong, I know I am the baby and all,
I got to be strong and just hold on.
I just want to be strong and just hold on because I know I will see you
again, I know that. You always say, me and you forever and when I
hear that it takes me to a happy place.
I can be the one that love you in life and no one can.
I can also be your superman so take my hand and fly.
I'll love you until I die.
I'm not trippin' off others because I know that they going to hate on
me.
I just hope I got a wife that consist of her saying, "you married, I love
you my baby!"
To my love Kaylah.

-Lil' D

From The Beat: Being in love is beautiful. We hope this experience of being incarcerated makes you a smarter young man on how you want to live the rest of your life, free of this type of stress. Too many incarcerated have lost their loves, because of them being locked up, which sounds like it has happened to you. We bet you will only grow from this heartbreaking experience.

Time Or Money

Time is money and money is time so don't mess wit' mine cause if you do be expecting problems.

-Lil' Dizil

From The Beat: What happens to your understanding of time when you're locked up? Are you just missing out on money or is it life that's more important? Would you give up your time/life willingly if you got paid for it? We think time is a whole lot more than money.

A Part Of Me

Well yeah, my color has been black and white. It all started the first time I came to the hall 12/20/06 until today, and I'm still in here.

Anyways, I met this girl and I didn't think it would work out but I always asked her if I went to jail will she be there for me. She would say yes, but I didn't believe her. But I didn't know I would be coming to jail for robbery. I called her and told her that I was in the hall and she said she already know. So I asked her how you know and she said that one of my friends called her and told her.

So then my time was up on the phone and I said, "I love you," and she said, "I love you too and I will never leave you," then we hung up.

-Dmarcus

From the Beat: That must have been a relief, to hear that she still cares about you. Does it make you feel differently about your situation? What would you have felt if your girl had said that she couldn't be with someone in jail? Does tough love work better when you're trying to help someone through difficult changes?

Three Questions

1. Time and Money

I want more time cause with more time I can get more money and mo' money that's mo dough to blow.
Same Life

2. I would keep my life the same cause everything happens for a reason, so my life is the way it is 'cause this is how I grew up, so I get it how I live, feel me.

3. Can't Forget 'Em

The most unforgettable characters I ever met was my family and loved ones. How can you forget about the ones you love?

-Lil' Dame

From The Beat: We kind of want to respond to each of these thoughts separately, but we also like your writing so much that we hope you'll end up answering just one of our topics (or writing about anything else that you're interested in!) so we can get full a full concentration of Lil' Dame wisdom. In the meantime, one thought. You say you don't want your life to change - but that means that you want to stay free, right, since you've been free for most of your life. So how will you live your life in a way that makes sure you never go to jail - that's a change in your life that you'd never want!

Would You Rather Change Your Life Or Keep It The Same?

There has been a time in my life when I thought about changing my life. I think that not one person has lived the perfect life were they haven't thought of even one time in their life that they would want to change.

There are a lot of things I would want to change in my life and one of them is me being here up in the Hall. That would be one of the times I would have changed. What made me say I want to change my life is me being in here. This isn't a place where I want to be. Now, there isn't nothing holding me back because now, there is nothing I could even do about it, but just do the time. The reason why I would change being in here is because I rather be out doing better and good things.

-Francisco

From The Beat: There's nothing you can do to undo the past, but you can control what happens in the future. You're not doing life in prison or are you? You're going to step foot on the outs again. It is best that you learned this lesson now rather than later and before you did something you truly would have lived to regret.

What Keeps Me Up At Night

The thoughts in my head at night are thoughts about the outs,
Every night I think about things that should be different right now.
I think about my girl and we should be together at certain times of the day and night.

I think about being out there with my bras getting it.
I also think about ways I'm change my life, to make my family proud
I think about the racks I'm gonna see when I get
That's what keeps me up at night.

-Lil' Mikey

From The Beat: Plenty going on in your head. Now, break it down for the readers and your self about the outs, how things in your life should be different, spending quality respectful time with your girl, your bras, and living right, forget the b-s. Tell us how you are going to change and make your family proud and do it!!

Time or Money

Money, money, money

yeah I'm true to those things.

Money makes the world go around

time is life but money with no world.

Having money is good for your self but hitting house licks bad for your health
so get your money the legit way and get yo' pay off the block
before you be in prison and the clock still gone tic tick

-Lil' Damani

From The Beat: It's good to hear someone distinguishing bad ways from good ways of making money.

Getting Out Of Crime

What do you see for your future?

I wanna own a Cannabis Club and be a porno star.

What do you fear for your future?

I fear of being in prison for life 'cause somebody might make me mad or mess with my family or my money and I might have to bust a head.

That's actually terrifying. Do you have a plan to avoid that?
Yeah, hire some solid ass person to do it for me.

What could make you mad enough to risk so much freedom?
Steal, harm, snitch.

Have you ever thought of getting out of crime?
Yeah

How?

Finish High School, go to college, own a Cannabis Club and have some kids.

-Lil' Dame

From The Beat: Nice work stepping up on this little question and answer. Especially since it ended up on you coming up with a plan for your future. What do you plan on studying in college, and where do you plan to go? Will you apply for a scholarship? Will you try for a four year plan? Will you work while you go to school? We know from experience that the more tight your plan is (with all the details worked out), the more likely you are to make those plans work out. So share your plans with The Beat?

I Would Change It

I would change my life because my life's been through so much stuff. I saw a lot of my friends get killed and I saw my mother get killed and that hurt me because I needed her at a point in life, so peace out, Beat. This is yo' boy Lil' Sam.

-Lil' Sam

From The Beat: We are extremely sorry to hear about your is such a traumatic experience. We know it bothers you, we truly and seriously advise you to seek a trusting adult help regarding this matter. Although those close to you are gone, you're still here, Lil' Sam! We know you have learn from your friends mistakes and realize that life itself is very fragile. We only have one life to live and it wasn't meant to be lived behind bars. Dedicate everything you do in your mother's memory and remember: Your mother may be gone physically, but she is not truly gone until she no longer has a place in your heart.

Lovin' It

What's good, Beat? This Maniac from Hayward. Well, you know I'm locked up — but I'm lovin' life! Because I know I'm gon' be a'ight. This time is nothin'. I'm knocking it out like Mike Tyson.

I know I'm gon' have a good life. It's just a matter of time. Don't get me wrong: I ain't never gon' stop bangin'! But I'm'a be a'ight. All, keep it solid and stay up. 'Cause I'm lovin' it!

-Maniac

From The Beat: If you plan never to stop banging, then you plan to keep coming back to lock-up facilities. So if you're lovin' being locked up, you'll get to do it again and again. Finally you'll be putting in work in the Pen — but tell us again: Why would you want to do that? What's to love about lock up? Okay, we know you said you'll be out and free — but what's your plan to stay free?

It Just Ain't Right

I would change my life, because some of the stuff I've been through just ain't right! Some kids haven't seen some of the stuff that I have seen.

They haven't done some of the stuff I've done. It just ain't right! I wish that I could turn my life back, but I can't. That's why I need to change it.

-Delonzo

From The Beat: And when you change, some of those youngsters who want to change but think it can't be done, will see and believe. 'Cause deep down they know what they're seeing is wrong, but they feel a need to belong. Follow through — change and maintain. Stay strong.

I'm Ready

i'm ready to get out of this beach
and go on with my life
i'm ready to stop messing up
and handle my business
i'm ready to get out this life style
and do good
i'm ready to make my family proud
i'm ready to be out on my own
gettin' my grown man on
i'm ready to start my own family
with my lovely fiancée
i'm ready to be successful
and overall — i'm just ready

-Lil' J

From The Beat: You know how they say: ready, set, go! Now we know you're ready. What is your plan to get yourself set to go. Do you have to wait till you're released or can you work on getting a degree while you're in placement? What about some job training? What kind of job or career do you imagine for yourself in the end? What jobs are you willing to take to begin?

Money or Time

I'd rather have money, because being locked up isn't good. There ain't nothing to do in here but what they tell you to do and when you're locked up you can't get money because when you have money you can most likely do anything you want to do. When I have money I buy things that I like such as clothes, shoes and other things but being locked up is a bad thing and when I get out I'm going to get off probation and I'm not going to come back. I'm going to get a job and finish high school and get a high school diploma, and hopefully go to college and get a better job.

-Adant

From The Beat: It's tough to change your ways, but if you really want to and you can make an effort to change your habits, including what you do in your free time, where you go and who you hang out with — you just might be successful!

Respect

Greetings to all who are locked up behind doors and prison bars. My name is Curioso. I'm a former gang-member from Hayward California.

I've been hanging out with my homies since I was a young teen. I started bangin' when I was fifteen, and I recently got jumped in at age seventeen, and now I'm gonna be eighteen. So I've been associated for almost six years.

Everyone gets to live their own life and lifestyle. So as you know, I chose a gangster's life as a gang banger I guess you can say I'm going the wrong way. But in my view, being a gang-member ain't as bad as you think!

You see, nowadays those so-called gangsters be killing for the simple fact that rivals is wearing too much of their colors. Well as for me I don't live like that, I'm about respect, so if I see my rival slippin' and he don't say nothin', I'm not gonna shoot him and kill him, but if I see him after, and I'm by myself and he's with his homeboys, I'll remember him.

So now you know I'm all about respect. Coming from ALACO.

So if you choose a gang-member's life and you decide to get out, like I said before, you a coward. Because a gangster's life is about respect, money and power. And their ain't no reason you have to get out your varrio and representing for your raza.

-Curioso

From The Beat: during the time you've been here, you've been a faithful Beat contributor, a worker, a high school graduate, an inspiration and support for other detainees, and a cheerful presence in your unit. What a waste, then to see you talk about respect in these terms. We know that you read the Bible and attend prayer workshops, so we know you respect faith. But what's the holiest thing in the world? The gift of human life... how could you ever believe in a lifestyle that justifies taking another human life, under any circumstances at all? You're gone now, but you still have friends in The Hall. Will someone answer this question for us?

Miss My Son

I'm ready to get out of here, because I love my son and I need to get out of here to be with him. I miss having my son with me and watching him.

I hope they let me out when I turn eighteen years old in two days! Yes, I'm turning eighteen and I'm trying to change my life to take care of my son like I was doing before I came here.

My son is the most special thing in my life. My son is nine months old. He just turned nine months old three days ago. I love him with all my heart!

-Carl

From The Beat: We trust you're home safe and sound. And yeah, now that you're a father it's a must that you turn your life around. You were doing a lot of things right, but you can't play both sides of the street — be one person by day and another by night. Be a good father. It's worth the fight!

Empty Without Money

I am very dedicated to money. I've done a lot of things for money. When I do illegal stuff for money I don't think about if I get caught how much time will I get. When I think about the consequence it makes me don't want to do what I'm doin' for money. Time and money is very valuable to me but when I'm out there I need to say wit' racks (couple thousands).

I can't be broke. If I'm broke I'll do some for money. I don't feel like one is more valuable but I just need to stay with money. I feel empty without it. This is how I feel about time or money. I just can't be broke for two long, or I'm gonna have to hit a lick. Well, I'm out.

-Zuko

From The Beat: You know the story of the turtle and the hare right? If you have a steady job, you always have that income flow. You're never rich, but you're never dead broke either. Plus you don't have to risk losing valuable work time in jail. What do you think — would a legit job keep you happy?

Some Thoughts On Money

"Money it is"

"Get money, people say"

"Money make me feel good"

"Keep the money lit, bra"

"I keep the money lit a long time along"

"The love of money"

"Money can make stuff but it can't make people."

"My love is money."

"Money loves my pocket"

"Pocket all the money"

"Money makes the world go right"

"Right goes all of the money"

-Lil' Byron

From The Beat: This is a tight little collage of all the sayings about money, almost like a remix. Which of these quotes fits best with how you look at money yourself? Do you have a set of quotes to go with time?

I Don't Wanna Change

I don't wanna change 'cause I like my hood money. It comes too fast on my spot. You feel me? But I do want to stay out of this place — and I really don't wanna see what the new hall be like!

-Lil' Dedaman

From The Beat: Like a mouse looking at the mousetrap, seeing that cheese sitting there but smelling it's a trap — if you keep chasing that fast money, you'll keep coming back!

The Hood

the day i started posting
the first day i started posting
was february sixteenth of two thousand two
i was about to be twelve
then i stopped until i was fifteen
then i caught a dope case
i had one hundred and sixty-five rocks
now i'm about to be seventeen
and i have a fortune off selling rocks
auntie shoutin' "who got it"
i tell her "i got it"
she say "i need it, i'm sick"
i tell her, "i need it to get rich"
"come back wit' eight, you straight"
shoot-outs and dirt go' change
my 'hood always go' be the same

-Momo

From The Beat: How will you spend that money when you're six feet under? Or who will you trust to mail it to you after you've caught an L, spending a life time in jail for that little bit of money you thought was a fortune till the years ate it up like a baby portion. Poisoning your auntie when she needs real medicine, not baking soda and whatever else you mix in. It's time to make a change in your life style before they lock you away and set you to work on a real rock pile. The game keeps killing as long as young men stay willing to believe its lies. Quit before they keep you inside.

Girls Girls Girls

Girls girls girls, I do adore (Jay-Z) but let me tell you something about girls they will break you they will make you do things you never really thought you'd do.

Like when you fall in love, the love is unconditional. When you are in love with a girl, you will do anything so that love won't fall apart.

Some girls will say so much bullshhh, just so you will like them, but those perras ain't about shhh and that's for real!!!

To all you so-called players out there, you better know these girls 'cause those girls might just play you before you play them. So be careful.

-Theory

From The Beat: Are you basing this on experience? Did you meet a girl who wasn't honest? Have you ever been with a girl who was honest and caring, and treated you with respect? Also, have you ever treated a girl with care and respect? Why do you think the "battle of the sexes" gets so intense? What about friendship, have you ever had a really good friend who was a girl?

My Real

On the real, you ninjas be thinking like when you write something in The Beat — y'all be lyin' y'all ass off! And that's just on the real.

Y'all say that y'all got this and that. You know you ain't got nothin' on the outs. Just be real, ninjas. Keep it real. Don't tell no lies.

-No Luv

From The Beat: Some things written in our pages, it would be better if they were not true. And that's on the real, too. Stay true to the game, and the game will do you too! And you need to find some self-love before you self-destruct. Slow your roll.

Never Involve The Family

Time and money are both very important. Money, because that's what the world revolves around. And time, 'cause anything can happen in time. I've done ran up ion people's spots and beat them down for some cash, plus someone paid me to do it. But I would never involve my family and a get cash fast lick or something like that.

-Lazy

From The Beat: Don't you see, the choices you've made are already involving your family! When they cry for you being in jail, when they stay up wondering if you're safe, when they stress on you, worry about you, miss work to come to court, all of it. Is money more important to you than family? We doubt it.

What The Difference

What's the difference 'bout gettin' money, legally or illegally? I'm gone get it regardless, so stop hatin' on me sittin' in this hall and people still acting funny but don't get mad and you catch me in the bed wit yo snow bunny to be continued.

-Lil' Solid

From The Beat: Hmmm....we're not sure where your headed with this, but it sounds like you're trying to blame others or the system for your problems. While those things may be true, the bottom line is it's you who is locked up. Sometimes you just have to accept that things are the way they are and then find a way to navigate it to your best interest. We're going to go out on a limb and say that getting money illegally is not the best move for you.

Would I Change My Life?

Yeah, I would change my life but I'm not gone just change mine I will change my lil' brother Tao because we need each other we need to be out and help our mother and support our family, the ones that need us the most I love my brother and he love me too.

We both going to change our lives around when we get out. The reason I said that I'm going to change my life around 'cause I'm tired of being locked up and tired of seeing my brother being locked up and can't get out.

-Rolontei

From The Beat: Family first, good for you! What must you do to avoid the traps? What must you do to stay off this path? Tell us your vision on succeeding! One day at a time!

Can't Wait To Be Free

What's good, Beat? This is Scarface from Richmond. Well, you know how it is — same stuff, different day. Just tryin' my best to do a good program so I can get out of here and turn my life around.

The first thing I'm gonna do is get me a job so I can support my moms and my girl wit' the baby. And I will finish school. Well, to all, stay up, be safe and stay out of trouble. Alrato!

-Scarface

From The Beat: Man, you're becoming one of our steady Beaters, by just saying where you're head is at, you're teaching our readers. For a homeboy to grow up to be man, he's got to have some kind of positive plan and see it through. We're happy for your mom, your girl, your baby — and we're proud of you. Do your do!

Flow

My money is essential
My squad is fundamental

Baby give me brain

She call it all mental

We riding in Le Sabres

You riding in a Pinto

My mouth never run out of ammo

We play wit' toys you can call it a semi

While we smoke on Bobby you smoke on Whitney

My pockets on full

You dudes is on empty

Baby bet wit' me

RIP Ron Pac and Weezy

For the rest of the haters

Play wit' my afro

I'll split yo taper

Purple and gold grill call me a Laker

And the best gets greater

Cool like water I swim wit' the fishes

You don't know me yet

I don't talk to snitches

Tomorrow youngsta and the rest is history

You other dudes is sissies

-Stank

From The Beat: Some of your rhymes are really great and then others you could work on. Also, rhyming is creative and fun, but you can also say something while you rhyme. It's possible to have a message other than you being greater than others.

Change

I would want to change my life, because the life I'm going through is not leading me anywhere. I don't know where I'm going, and I need help.

-Please help

From The Beat: Being able to admit you need help is huge! Most people can't do that. They are ruled by their pride. But humility is a virtue. Admitting your needs is strong. It means you're ready to accept help. Keep asking and you will receive.

Words to the Wise

The streets is hard, we got a job. Our job is staying alive.

-Young Life

From The Beat: What's your plan?

Trav & Wayne

Wayne: What's up wit it, bra'?

Trav: Shhh, you know, same thing; just another day. What up with you?

W: Bra', I'm up in this place stressing, you feel me? They tryna lock a ninja up until Jesus come back.

-Trav And Wayne

From The Beat: Hey guys, you need to step up as writers: if you want to be published in The Beat Within. The pieces where you hate on others, talk mess, won't cut it. Get it together or forget it!

Squares

man i'm from here
stop kidding yourself
you talk about you from the mob
when you on yo' block
you get robbed
or you be in the house
before it turn dark
i'm tired of ninjas sayin'
i'm from here, i'm from there
when truthfully you a square

-Iz-treal

From The Beat: Take a good look at where you're at right now, and you want to claim that you're from here? Without a doubt you can spend the rest of your life coming in-and-out of lockdown just trying to prove you're not a square. Do you really care that much? Wouldn't you rather be free than in the system's clutch?

Hella Mad

What's up wit' it Beat? It's just Twan, just sayin' what's up, because I'm hella mad. I messed up in this camp stuff. I'm trying to switch my program back. I'm out. Do your thing and don't let nothing stop you.

-Twan

From The Beat: Don't give up Twan. We know you're going through it, but you can make it, we have faith in you!

The Same

I'd like to keep my life the same. Didn't do nothing to get here, just had a warrant.

-Ryan

From The Beat: Does this mean that everything you do out there now is legit? We hope so!

Time Is Money

Time is money because if I don't have money I don't have no food or no clothes that's why I say that money is all I got and if you don't have no money you can't do nothing and you can't go no where and if you want something to eat. I can't go no where without money because I'm always with my homeboys and my girl saw that's why I don't go no where without money.

My name is Chucky and they call me Juanito so that's why I need money all the time.

-Lil' Juanito

From The Beat: How are you going to get money upon getting out? Can you work a part time job? Can you leave the fast money? Or, do you roll the dice, get fast money, chill with the homeboys and get caught up, lose your girl, stay locked up in a cell, get sent away and fall further into the grips of the system?

Two More Months

What's up with it Beat, this is the homie Dreamer from Hayward, still keepin' it solid in this camp thang. I went to court last Wednesday and they slapped me wit' two more months so I got another court date in April 19th. Other then that everything been goin' coo' for me goin' on HV's, chillin' with the fam and the homies.

I'm not even trippin' off two months 'cause it's already seven months behind these Alaco walls doin' time, don't stress because time passes and almost everybody gets out unless you went down for some serious shhh. So to all behind the wall stay up and keep it. Stay up and see you in a quick min'

Alrato, RIP Arturo Romero you will never be forgotten, always in our hearts and mind.

-Dreamer

From The Beat: Two more months might cause stress, but it also gives you time to figure out a game plan. We are waiting to hear your game plan, so that this last time served ends up being your last ever!

The Hall

man i'm in the hall
i could be posted drinkin' alcohol
bored hour by hour
another ninja next to me in the shower
that's hella weak, real talk
down that hallway i walk
on my way to court
staff blowin' the whistle like too short
some days visits from mom: how's it been
it's been cool, now that i met the beat within

-Iz-treal

From The Beat: We appreciate that last line, and we appreciate the quality of your rhymes. But we'd be lyin' if we didn't say that you need to take a look at your ways on the outs. Whether or not it involves quitting alcohol, you've got to change your life to stay out of the hall. Posted on the block like a target for your enemies and teaching the police to recognize your identity. Give your mom a break and don't keep making the same mistake.

Time Or Money

I pick time because all I get is time and on the other hand I get money because that's all I do is waste my time making money that's what I do best that what everybody do best.

-Rolontei

From The Beat: How are you going to handle your time upon getting out? What's the plan?

My World

I love that money,
But I do want that time
See me, for life, it's money over women
A born hustler
And I love money
And why I say, "It's this way?"
'Cause what do I love?
Girls, yeah,
But money I love more
Money comes first over all my girls
'Cause I fell in love with this one girl
And you know she played me,
So now I won't change
My thoughts,
And that's how it's going to be.

-Granny Baby

From The Beat: You love money, but would you do anything and everything for it? What won't you do for money? You're a hypocrite because just like you're playing girls now, you're doing exactly what she did to you. You didn't like it when she played you, so what makes you think these girls don't like you playing them, too? By treating females like this, you're letting that one girl get the best of you. Leaving you was her loss. Not every girl is like her. You just haven't been searching in the right places.

Freedom Long To Go

When I first came to jail I
had long to go, I was thinking
'bout court but it was long to
go long to go long to go

Every time I think it's long to go,
when I look at the wall I say to
myself long to go long to go long to go

When I look at my calendar long to
go everytime I think long to go I wish
I could get out long to go long to go
long to go

-Alanden

From The Beat: Nice little poem about what it feels like for you while incarcerated. We hope that this long to go feeling is near it's end and you'll be moving on to start probation, placement, whatever it is that is in store for you. Best!

That Someone

I met someone and it changed my life and I'm not even with that person, but it was something in the way she looked, smiling more. I have not been knowing her that long. But it seems like I been knowing her forever when I only just met her. It's like we have something in common, like we been together forever.

-Girly

From The Beat: Sometimes we connect with people right away. It's like instantly, you're best friends. This happens often when you're a teenager. And unfortunately it does not always last. For some strange reason, when things start out very intense and all you want to do is spend all your time with that person, the relationship usually cannot sustain that intensity for long. Often what will happen is you will fall out with that person, but often you also come back together in a more tempered and healthy way.

Time and Money

Time or money? Well, time and money are both valuable parts of life. So I don't think you can put more of your life into either one of them without the other. I mean, time isn't going to go any faster — so why not make money while time is passing by.

-Moneymaker

From The Beat: Yeah, but if you're making your money through crime and it has you serving time, then you'll be making no money or slave wages. So free time is worth more than money, right? 'Cause if that fast money has you catching time

My Opinion On Me

My opinion is I'm a good person on the inside but I do bad things.

-Anthony

From The Beat: Most people who do bad things are probably good people somewhere inside— does it mean their actions are excusable? Maybe there's a way to nurture the good person you know you are so that he feels strong enough to emerge through your actions. If everyone did that, the result would be truly revolutionary.

To My Bra

What's up with it Beat, I really don't know what to say to you anymore but just free my brother Mike Jonez, he fightin' a hard case, they just sent him to Santa Rita, all right and be safe bra don't let no one get to you. Much love. I love you bra.

-Lil' Vee

From The Beat: Your brother must feel like he's in the dark a lot of the time, but if he's facing a long night, your love and support and loyalty are the stars that light that night up. We hope he reads this. He needs all the support he can get it, given the road he is on it to a place no one wants to go, prison. We hope you too will wise up and get of the track that brings you to places like this!

Change in the Future

One day I would like to change, but when I change I'm going to go to church and stop selling drugs, and get a job and start stackin' money until I get enough money to get a house. Then I'll start selling weight so I won't have to go sell little ass rocks and be on the corner getting chased by the police and won't nobody know what I'm doing, they just know that I'm rich.

-Eizzle

From The Beat: First off, we'd like to apologize if we've gotten your name wrong. We couldn't quite read your writing, and we thought it would be disrespectful to leave your words unprinted while we tried to find you in the unit. We wanted to see your piece published, even if we disagree with it. And oh, boy do we disagree with it: It's tragic actually, to think you really believe you'll ever have the life you want by pursuing this way of living. Yes, you need to get a job, but selling weight, that won't do you any good! You HAVE to live legit, otherwise you'll always be looking over your shoulder. Try again, tell us about what you'd want to do with your life if you could have any sort of job you wanted?

Paradise

A place I long to go is paradise. And when I really start eating that's were I want to go, and bring back one of the baddest girls you ever seen. I really wanna go to paradise and one day to see a new place. To see how they live different than us. So by the time I turn eighteen I will be there on vacation with my brothers.

-Chip

From The Beat: You want to go to paradise and bring back to your home the baddest girl? Now why? So you both can get arrested and taken off the streets? What's the plan youngsta? By the way, where is paradise?

Untouchables

Yeah, guess who is back
Still flippin' birds and flows?
This ya' man's, Young 'Hova
We here,

But it ain't for everybody
Because the rest of y'all could get twisted up
And touched quick

Faster than rabbits make love
This just a State of Emergency, peoples
The dynasty is back

'Bout to take over the globe,
So break bread

My property, Young money navy
Going against this president

Is just like atheist,
So how you wanna do, world?
As I see these 2003 and up dy dying

In the line of duty
As the saying goes:
In the drought,

That dynasty continue
Y'all die

No threat
I leave that to the broke

It cost to go to war
I'm like Bush

Get yo' moola up
Before ya' step up to this young moola President

Young money billionaire
This just a notification

That yo' boy is back
Get a passport

Yes, we on everybody's map
Check overseas

I am the M.J. of this business
What more can I say?

-Sincere

From The Beat: More than this! What are you talking about? If you want, we can sit with you and go over your pieces, but as for this piece, we cannot afford to have you brag about the clique/the crew, you need to teach!

Time Or Money?

I'd rather have time because with time you can make money, but then again, if you have both time and money, ninjas gonna hate.

-Ray Ray

From The Beat: So what if people hate? Smells more like jealousy to us. People are always going to find a reason to hate. You know this. Don't allow something trivial like what other people think to stop you from accomplishing your goals. People rather see you broke and hungry than living happily ever after. They're either with you or against you and anyone that's against you doesn't deserve your attention.

I'm Gone!

What's good wit' you Beat? Well this is my last day being up in here. Then tomorrow I'm off to YA. I just wanna say thank you to everyone that have helped me get through the segment of my situation. Also thank you to all the other Beat Within members for taking their time out and allowing us to express our feelings the right way. To all that's up in max keep that shhh solid and stay up.

-Young Kraz

From The Beat: Thank you, we will miss your humor, you're sports predictions, your insights. There will always be a place for you in our pages, and we hope you plan on writing to us from the Y.

Last Court Date

What's up Beat! This Anthony from the Max unit ain't really much to say, but I just wanted to say what's up to all doing their time keep your head up and stay solid. To the homie that's going to a group home pimp that shhh. I might be going to, I got my last court date soon.

Well that's it for now -- later Beat.

-Anthony

From The Beat: Good luck with your court date, keep us posted on what happens!

Change Life Or Keep It The Same

Well I'm sure everyone haves a past they would like to change but what some people don't realize is that what makes you different , unique, bright, or sometimes it teaches you. That's why I wouldn't want to change my past nor my life.

-Mercedes

From The Beat: Good for you. There may be things we don't like about ourselves, but they can't necessarily be separated from the things we do like. If we changed out past, we might lose some of the bad, but we might also lose some of the good. And it is true that difficult experiences can make us stronger, brighter people. However, some people undergo such horrible things that it is difficult for them to reclaim themselves, they are too hurt by what has happened to them. We must remember to show those people great compassion so they can try to find the good in their lives too.

A Drought

it's a drought, a drought, and i ain't been smokin'
woke up the last few mornings wit'out the blowin' of potent
so i go next door to see what's good wit' the holdin'
but they said it's all bad doobies what they smokin'
so better call up young chris 'cause his line was open
told me thhat baby mike got it but he jus' left oakland
get ghost, ride out as i start dippin' and yolkin'
hit up my ninja young dave but his connect was broken
now i'm dummy-ass mad and feel like funkin'
i hear moms and lil' ant next door and they blowin'
i got five on the grapes, so who's good to get loaded
i jus' made it in time fo' breakfast, so we all gon' smoke thhhhs

-Eric

From The Beat: They say you can't get addicted to it, but when you wake up and all you want is to do it — and you go all over town just trying to run some down — then when you can't find none, you're ready to funk with someone — all we can say is: can you spell addict? No, it's not crack or hop or meth, but when a drought has you jonesin' just like them — it's time to reexamine your priorities. For example, what got you into trouble with the authorities?

"The Ninjas Talk During Smoke Time"

Dizzy walks to a friend's house, then knocks at the door. Michael also known as Big Hubby Boy answers the knock.
Big Hubby boy says, "What up?"
Dizzy replies, "What's up man! Man, you look so thin! I'm going to call you Mr. Toothpick-man from now on!
Michael laughs, "Ha, ha! Very funny dude! Wanna smoke? It's four ten. We gotta be smoking by four twenty!
Dizzy, enthusiastically, "All right, let's blow them grapes!" Soon after: "Dang I'm high, ninja."
Michael mumbles, "Me too, ninja. You know what, man? Let's talk about something."
Dizzy looked at him funny. "Like what? ... Oh, I do have something to say. Why ain't you start hitting weights? You hella thin!
"Women love thin guys, man. Don't you know that? Long and tall, you know what I mean?"
"I know you always be messing with women. Every time I visit, you bringing some females in here to kick it with."
"What flavor you like best, Dizzy, vanilla or black chocolate?"
"Man, I just like women, period. You know that!"
"Yeah, I guess so. If she twitch, you itch! Well, man, till they get here, let's watch some World's Funniest Videos till we laugh ourselves sick."
"Yeah, man. I'm a comedian myself. I like to laugh!"

-Dizzy and Michael

From The Beat: We had to clean this piece up a lot. What makes you think we want to put that raunchy stuff in our 'zine. No offense, but it seems like what you need most to learn is what is appropriate and inappropriate behavior, speech, etc. Maybe standing on the corner selling dope, getting crude helps you fit in, but it's not appropriate material for The Beat Within. We understand your desire to make people laugh, but is putting down someone else the only thing you think is funny? Sorry to sound so critical, but we're ready for you to show us something about the real feelings of a young man who wants to live free.

Time is money

To me, time is money — because it run in my family! That all we know how to do!

I am a full-time hustler, and that because if I don't do it, I feel like I am doing nothing! I be thinking, "It's all this money out here! So I need to go get it! I need to make a million in a day! I know if you put your mind to it, it can happen — and you can get it!"

That's why all I have to say is: Time is money.

-Lil' Sammie

From The Beat: It's great to dream, but you need to look at where you are right now. Dream of success, yes! But you need to break the family mold. On the real, you know where that goes. You say that time is money, but you know that fast money on the grind means long stretches of time with shackles on your feet and freedom on your mind. Do the crime, do the....

I Have Hope

I'm in here hella mad, just waitin' on this little court day in like two weeks. I just came out my room, I was just writing my girl you feel, she 'posed to be getting this phone cut on for I could start to call her on some real shhh. She write me one to many two letters a week. She said she really love me though. I can't wait till I get out for I could see what see really talking, 'bout but until then I'm just gon' wait and pray for the best.

-Lil' Rome

From The Beat: The one you like best? Do you plan to be with her if you get out soon? What kind of girl is she? Do you love her? You write about her a lot, but we realized we don't know that much about her and what she means to you. It sounds like she cares about you if she writes you so many letters, no?

Would I Rather Change My Life.

Yeah I would change my life, that's what I'm going to do when I get out, 'cause I don't want to end up back in here.

I'm just gon' give my life to God and go the right way hopefully God get me through this. I just put my case in his hands, so I hope it works out for me but I know it is 'cause he say anything is possible if you really believe in him, though.

Amen. I'm gon' holla at y'all next week.

-Lil' Rome

From The Beat: It's good to see you reaching out and finding faith to help you go through your troubles. What kinds of changes would you want to make? And does reading The Bible or thinking about Jesus help you think of ways you could change? Like if you literally had Jesus beside you on your release date, what kind of advice we he have for you about what to do and where to go now that you were free? What would Jesus do out on the streets?

Jail

Being in jail is like living in hell
You gotta gain respect in order to keep these haters in check
You gotta watch what you do
And what you say
You don't know who is fake or tryin' to get at you one day
What to do?
When it all comes down
Either you stay back or you stand your ground
But standing your ground
Got you here in the first place
But if you don't stand your ground
You a sucka ass ninja anyways
Life is tough
When you think it's sweet
You gotta live life rough
That's how the game be
Disrespect the rules
That's the life you choose
You can't say nothing
When the game is over
Cause you lose.

-Chyna

From The Beat: We think you're not 100 percent correct on this. We think sometimes people place too much emphasis on pride and they forget that being humble is a virtue. The greatest saints were the humblest people. However, being humble doesn't mean you should let people walk all over you. You really have to find an inbetween.

Far Away

Even when you're far away don't forget my pretty little face.
When our skies are blue maybe even gray don't forget
I'm thinking of you.
Even when we're far apart
don't forget about my poor little heart.
When we first met I knew you knew
I could be the real me in front of you.
So now I say, even when you're far away
sitting in the bay while I'm doing time in CYA,
don't forget about me no matter where I go
or what I do or say.
I'm always and forever thinking of you
while doing time in YA
just pray and don't forget about me.

-Girly

From The Beat: When you know you're getting sent away for a while, it's hard not to worry about people forgetting about you. Out of sight, out of mind — as the expression goes. All we really want is to know that people care about us and that there is someone out there that notices when we're not around. But if there are people that you miss when they're not there, whose absence feels like a hole — then chances are, they feel the same way about you. If they don't, they're not worth your time. We're sorry that you have to go off to CYA and the only advice we can give is to tell you to keep your head down and finish your program as quickly as you can. Don't catch extra time.

Change A Bit

Would you rather change your life, or keep it the same? Both, because I would only change certain things like how I treat my dad and to stay out of trouble. But anything else I'll keep the same like my friends and my living habits.

-Jackie

From The Beat: Those sound like pretty manageable goals. Why don't you start trying to make those changes now?

Young Love

Your loving tender heart is so strong
With my baby mama I'll never do wrong
Most friends hate 'cause we're tight
Anybody disrespect I'm gonna take flight
Many things don't need a downfall
She's no downfall, she's with me, so fight
all y'all

I think better with her in my reach
Just get a good girl and listen to her she can
teach. I do my thang in my streets
So forever on beast.

It's Lil' Papa the best at least
To have love by your side isn't bad.
I wake up every day with her there... I'm glad

But I'm gonna hold her down all the way.
She makes me feel good like the month of
May

My baby momma, love her to death
I'll stand with her till there's nothing left.
Mykel and Lil' Papa ask about this boy
Real ninjas tell you he play with big toys.
RIP Weezy

-Lil' Papa

From The Beat: We hope that this poem only describes your past, because if you want to honor this love you share, in fact if you want to honor the best in yourself at all, it will be time to end those days of doing your "thang" on the streets. Your girl deserves better, you deserve better... are you going to put that life aside this time?

Long Way

I have a long way to go to college
I can get some knowledge
going there might take some mileage.

-Jamari

From The Beat: One day at a time, and before you know it the door to college will be there to open and explore. First stop, high school!

Use Your Time, Make Your Money

Where I'm from, they say, "Money over females." Yeah, sometimes I think it sounds corny, but when you take the time and think about stepping into someone else's shoes, you'll figure out why people say money is more important than time.

When you do stuff like bangin' and slangin', and you ain't got nothing else to rely on 'cause you don't know where your next meal ticket is coming from, all you actually have to keep you happy is money. Now that's not sayin' it's okay to slang, but if you don't come from the best home (some people for a fact are just raised in a messed-up situation) and you have nothing else to turn to — then you gotta survive! And as I see it: more power to you!

Time is also important though, because time is not guaranteed — and if you use it the wrong way, it can cost you money or even ya life! But with that, I'm closing. The only other thing I have to say is: Do what you gotta do, but just make sure it keeps you outta here. Stay solid. Gone!

-Nunu

From The Beat: How you gonna say "make sure it keeps you outta here" when here you are! That's the fact: It doesn't keep you outta here but brings you here. It puts you under lock and key if it doesn't bury you in the cemetery. Maybe the ones who "play it safe" only get that "little bit of time" before they get their next "little bit of time" — and "it ain't nothin' to a boss"! But you've already been here long enough to know that's a lie. Doing time is nothing anyone in his/her right mind would choose. We understand what you're saying about survival, and we're not judging you for your past — or anyone else raised in one of those "messed-up situations" — but it's time to face the fact that you're old enough now to change your act and get yourself some kind of legal pay. The only way to guarantee you will stay outta here is to get a j-o-b. Then for higher pay, get a higher degree, or just a reliable job history with letters of recommendation that say you are a good worker and earn your pay! We're talking about tomorrow not yesterday. Okay?

My Girl

Every night I cry lookin' at the picture of your face
It hurts me so bad that we apart and I got this case.

Bein' locked away is a stressful pain.

I never cheated on you, you was my main

Readin' your letter every night

I start to cry but everything's gon' be alright
Dreams about one life when we were together
I'll do anything to be with you girl, it doesn't matter.

I sleep with you on my on my side,
Because you solid and you're my girl, always down to
ride.

Beautiful smile and eyes like an open door
I'll run, run, until I can't run no more.
Please I need to have your heart inside my arms
It makes me feel safe and always warm
Open arms I'll hold you tight

Hold you fight with all of my night.

It's Lil' Papa and Mykel against the world,

Everybody stop because I love my girl.

She the light of my day.

The love in my heart forever will stay.

-Lil' Papa

From The Beat: "Eyes eyes like an open door." What a beautiful and poetic way of describing love, and the way you feel about your girl. We can't wait to read a poem about how you met, and what you've been through in life together.

If I Were To Change My Life

All I want out of life, is to look back at it and see no regrets. If I had a time machine, I would go back to all those times I messed up and change it around.

I would have never got into alcohol or drugs. I would have never committed those crimes that got me locked up. I should have made a move when I had a chance, but instead messed it all up.

-The One

From The Beat: If you learn from your mistakes, take the lesson deep and change your life style, then when you look back on your life up till now, there is nothing to regret. The only thing you really have to regret is if you fail to learn from the past. Forget alcohol, weed and criminal acts. Start to do right and when you get your freedom back — keep it like that!

I Love My Girl

I just wanna say I love my girl. She been with me through everything. I love her so much, she was always there for me when I needed to be saved. I feel hella bad about all the shhhh I have put her through. I asked her out four years ago on Valentine's Day. I wish I was out this year to be with her.

She always told me drugs would mess up my life, and I didn't listen. I know she's still waitin' for me like always. I miss you Laura and I can't wait to get out babe.

-Thinking Of You

From The Beat: We wish there were a name we could attach so that you could find this piece and hold onto it. Right now, in the Hall, you see clearly, and you see your girl's love clearly, but it will be harder once you're back home, with all those old temptations, to remember what you wrote on this day. Try to remember it, it will help you stay true to your girl and yourself. Peace!

Money All The Way!

Money is way more important then time because you can't do anything without money, there will be no time to do anything; eat, get clean, basically live and the day goes by. If you don't have any money you can't live your life. But you need time to make money and you can do time for the mistakes you make to get money.

-Callsania

From The Beat: It's a very tricky question indeed. You have identified a major problem with trying to name one or the other more important.

Time Or Hustler?

I'm addicted to the money, and money is the most valuable product of my time when I was selling dope. When I started dealing it was my freshmen year of high school. I sold a lot of good dope, of whatever kind, so that whenever people or homies wanted to smoke, they could always holla at me on my cell. They want my attention, they love it!

When the time came that I got caught up, I was only beginning to be a hustler. It was still only my rookie year, like I'm still a freshmen! But soon I was gathering lots of money, and in no time, I became a much smarter hustler, in the sense of street smarts. But once I recognized my life was so cruel and destructive, I began to wonder what I should do about it? Stop selling?

Since I came to jail, I began to think I might stop selling drugs on the outs. I've been thinking a lot about my life lately and what's most important it me. Also I've been asking myself, "Why? Why this cruel fate? Why did God betray me?"

Just since I've been locked up, I've changed my thinking about life a lot — but I will never change my life style! That's why I think my time is more important to me than money. So when I get out of jail, I'll start all over again. Trust me, party people! Guess what? — Nah, the truth is that I will never change my life style! I'll always be a hustler — for life! Guess what again? I'm just messing with you! Ha, ha! Of course I'm going to change. A life time is for growing up. But till then, don't judge me by my money.

-Dizzy Birdman

From The Beat: We've seen you flash your sense of humor and show your winning ways, but we haven't seen you get serious about much. When you keep tricking people as you do in this piece, thinking it's funny and you've got the last laugh, the truth is that you're really tricking yourself out — and if you can't give it some sustained serious thought, the last laugh will be on you. Why are you still kidding around all the time? It's not God who betrayed you. God is giving you another chance, but if you don't get sincere about change, you'll waste it.

The Hall Ain't Cool

Man, I been in here for almost three months, and I'm in a unit that got hella undercover drama going on! And dat ain't even coo! Some staff in here think they can do whatever, 'cause they got some spray.

What I'm saying is I wish they would treat us with more respect. All you got to say is, "I want it," and you got it! You don't have to run through someone's pockets. You feel? Give respect, get respect.

-Lil' Tay

From The Beat: You have to understand that you've given up certain freedoms you take for granted on the outs. You are not on an equal footing with staff — you're here because the judge doesn't think you're fit to be out in society. Staff has nothing to prove to you, but you need to prove you can keep your cool, follow instructions and show respect. Then you'll get respect.

Stay The Same?

I would rather keep it the same,

just change the way I do stuff.

I know I do bad things, but I'm not a bad person.

I like to do stuff to make me happy.

Why would I change?

I just got to be smarter about what I been doing.

Being in here just let me know what not to do wrong, and do it right. Next time. I just won't put myself out their like I did,

keep it on the under, like R-Kelly.

I make dough, that's my middle name,

I love flossing, boy I love the fame.

Jovonna will be Jovonna, and that's the name.

Stay true to the game.

-Lil' Mississippi

From The Beat: We're not sure what your game is, but we can't tell you about the thousands of times we've heard kids in the hall say they were gonna be smarter about it next time, but keep doin the same thing. Guess what happens? Sooner or later they show back up in here. This may be your first time, but if you keep up your game, it won't be your last. We can guarantee you that.

Shoutout

G-vo! Before I start, I wanna give a shout-out to all out there doing tiempo behind bars. Well, this is that vato, Flaco coming from Hayward and keeping it solid up in here.

As for those who are going to a group home or Camp/Ranch, do your tiempo and hold it down, because the varrio ain't going nowhere. It's only time that you got to kill! As for this vato, I ran from my first placement, but if things don't go bad — I'm going to do this next groupie!

Well, my prayers go out to those doing real tiempo up in CYA or the Pen' — or for those who are heading that direction! Pick your friends, choose well, and separate the fake from the real. Keep an eye out for those who are good to manipulate. Stay up and don't let your chin hit your chest. Stand firme and tall, and you're going to make it through it all.

-Flaco

From The Beat: If all you do is kill time, you'll get caught up again after you're released outside. You've got to use your time to build your mind, not just your body — fill your mind up with knowledge. Learn a trade or a skill. Get your diploma or GED so you can get a j-o-b! Yeah, the varrio will always be there, and so will all its traps and snares. As for manipulation, stay away from either end of that situation. Just be you while you use your time to improve, and not only will you get through — when they set you free, you'll know how to stay free, too!

Being Here

Being here is not fun.
Being here is boring as hell.
Being here is like being an animal in a cage.
Being here is because I have misbehaved.
Being here is not the stage.
Being here I cannot escape.
Being here is to stressful.
Being here is not good.
Being here I need to get out for good.

-Weezy

From The Beat: Nice rhymes Weezy. Sounds like you've got a handle on it. Now you just need to heed your own advice!

Second Chance?

What it do Beat, it's yo' boy young Chino from Hayward. Well I'm back up in the hall. I ran from Camp Sweeney now I'm over here asking for a second chance. I hope they do give me another chance.

-Chino

From The Beat: We believe everyone deserves second and even third fourth and fifth chances. But the question remains, how many more chances are YOU going to ask for? And by your actions do they deserve such a chance?

My Girl

My girl is 'bout the only thing I got. I'm not just saying that because I'm in this box. I hope to see her soon, then every thing will be cool. My girl is my passion, my girl is my life. When I get out of here I hope to make every thing right.

-Martin

From The Beat: We hope you make it right too! Just remember that is you respect women, they will always love you. If you disrespect them, you and she will be miserable. This means not taking women for granted, not using negative language, remembering to use contraception so you don't ruin her life, and many, many other things that you will learn over time.

The First Time

When I was in the 8th grade. When I first saw her, she was going to class, PE with Mrs. Trujillo. I couldn't help but say man you're so sexy.

So a couple of days into the school year I had to talk to her. She had a boyfriend but we were in every class together. I started talking to her. Next thing you know she starts hangin' out with me. We start to have feeling for each other. Then we went out and we been going out two years now. That was my first true love and she still is. Lana V is my girl and will always be.

-Alex

From The Beat: What a sweet love story. We are always happy to know about young men who learn to respect women early on and are able to have positive, stable relationships. You must have grown up with good female role models. Was it your mother, your sister, your grandmother? All three perhaps. You probably have some male friends that could use some counseling about how to treat women. Don't be afraid to voice your opinions on respecting women to your peers.

My First Love

What's up to all the jainas out there with y'all hearts broken. Don't even trip! For those young one's, love will keep on coming! But love can mean so many things to those who don't know what it really is: caring!

Showing you care through the ways you do or how you act, that's love! But for so many of these young vatos, that ain't it. Well, this young vato is in love, and that's what I believe love is: I care and miss that one person! But don't get fooled. Gangsters need love in their lives, too, but this vato will be quick to let her loose if she's not true. Not even love can make me soft!

To my loved one, I miss you and I'm always thinking of you.

-Flaco

From The Beat: Gangsters need love, too, but coming in and out of jail ain't cool. Leaving the one you love out there alone, is not something you need to continue to do — but if you stay trying to prove what a hard gangster you are, that's exactly what you'll do: Be stuck in the system's revolving door till they throw away the key and you go free no more! Gangsters also die young, and then love is just a deeper grief to their loved ones.

Trees

i smoke tree's
so I won't have to pop e's
make sure it's no seeds
in my muthafunkin' trees
i'm always be from the streets

-Swagg

From The Beat: Once upon a time, doctors prescribed cocaine to end heroin addiction — wrong! And so is your song if your problem is addiction, switching up is not a cure but a dangerous fiction. It didn't help you make the right decision so you'd stay away from juvenile prison.

Be My Valentine

will you be my valentine
make my world shine
and always be mine
you smell like fine wine
you'll always be mine
girl you know what's up
if i was out there
ninjas won't touch
you
but will you be mine
will you be my valentine
'cause you' the one i love
just the two of us
we ain't riding on a bus
we riding on jets
'cause you know we the best
baby girl stay true
to me and you
baby girl be my valentine
so me and you can shine

-Lil' Suave

From The Beat: Shine with the brilliance of your love and devotion. Shine by doing right with a legal notion of making money, 'cause incarceration's no love potion — but making money legally will guarantee you stay free to be with the girl of your dreams. Forget all those player schemes! Yanneam?

My Last Few Days Here

What's up, Beat? It's Scarface from Richmond. You know how it is in here: same stuff, different day. I'm just keeping my head up, and trying to finish my program so I can get out of here in these next couple of weeks.

Tomorrow is Valentine's Day, and I'm kind of mad — because I'm supposed to be out with my baby's mama, supposed to be taking care of her and my mom. I love and miss my baby's mama and my mom.

'Till I get that good release then, I have to keep my head up. To all, stay up and be safe. Alrato.

-Scarface

From The Beat: The closer you get to your release, the more stress you're likely to feel. And when you've already been disappointed once by the court, you'll find it hard to trust that what they say is real. Yet you've put yourself in a spot with no option but to keep your head up and be patient without stopping. Don't let frustration and stress near the end, mess up a good thing. You'll be heading home soon to your little family, to get a job, help your loved ones and reclaim your sanity.

Out Of This Place

What's up, Beat! It's me again, Lil' J, but this is my last Beat! I'm going to a group home tomorrow (!) in Stockton, for eighteen months.

I will be there until I'm nineteen. I know: Man, that's hell of long! But I have to handle my business, because that's just what I have to do. Well, that's it for now, Beat. All right then, peace — I'm out!

-Lil' J

From The Beat: Major props on getting that good placement. Yeah, eighteen months is a long time, but the question is whether you'll use to that time to work on your mind. When you're released, will you have outgrown the ways that brought you here today? When that nineteen year old returns, will he have learned to hustle legally? Will he have earned a diploma or GED?

This Is No Place For Me

Well, first, this ain't the best of the places to be. It isn't fun having to have someone control your life, someone to tell when and when you can't use the bathroom.

It isn't fun not being able to use the phone or eat when you want to; and having to use the same underwear and socks that your roommate might have used the night before! Those are just a few of the conditions you have to accept while you're in here.

So, I don't know about you — but this just isn't the place to be for me.

-Lil' Gil

From The Beat: Once you know this isn't the place to be, it's up to you to make changes so you will stay free. Too many decide, "I'll just be more slick" — and they usually come back quick; but for sure sooner or later, you'll get caught up for something if you don't change your life style and find a legal hustle.

Money on my Mind

Why? Because all I think about is money.

If you don't have money, you can't do nothing, because you broke. And when you broke and walking down the street and you want something to eat, you can't get it. Or what if you wanted to go buy some shoes, but you don't have the money. That's why I say money on my mind, cause if you think about money, you gon' have money, and then you could buy whatever you want or need.

-Eizzle

From The Beat: Having money is a good thing, and necessary...the question is really HOW you get that money. Short term, a person can make money in all sorts of shady ways, but long term, that kind of money never seems to stick around... plus it can result in all sorts of long term BS (jailtime, drama, dropping out of school, and worse.) So yeah, you do need money to live. But do make that money legit? And if so, how?

Valentines Day Lost 2 Years Straight

What up Beat and Beat readers. It's Lil' Solid speakin' on Valentine's Day, locked up again two years runnin' - and it ain't cool because I miss my baby mama hella much. She done been wit' me thru thick and thin so I'm just hella hot that I'm in here for that second year and what's crazy is I told myself I wasn't gone be in here for another Valentines' Day. So I'm gonna try to go home and do good for my baby mama and my daughter. It's time for me to do somethin' new and different.

-Lil' Solid

From The Beat: That's the problem with getting locked up, isn't it. You miss out on a all the good stuff: family, holidays, girlfriends. Why do you say you're going to "try" to do better? Is it because you can't commit to actually doing better. Next time say, I will do better. I have goals and I will achieve them. I will be a good father, I will be a good boyfriend, I will be a good son. As soon as you put that little word "try" in, you give yourself an excuse, an out. We know you can do it, you just need to start doing it!

Copasetic

What's up Beat, this yo' boy Lil' Glen and yep I'm back in these played out halls and I promised myself I would not come back but after I had a little talk with my self and my grandma I decided it's about that time to make that change and I know I won't change overnight but in time I feel it's all gon' be copasetic. So until next time, I love y'all.

And to my grandma Glenda and Auntie Beverly I love y'all!

-Lil' Glen

From The Beat: Very cool the way you said that "a little talk with myself". We'd give anything to see that written down in The Beat as a straight up interview between the two most important people in your life: You, and you!

Africa

I wish I could go to Africa to visit all my Africans because I love them. Africa is a beautiful place with beautiful women and handsome men. I want to visit Africa to see how it would be if we were never stolen or our ancestors was never taken from our homeland. Because everybody deserves to know their background from hundreds of years ago.

-Bebe The Son Of God

From The Beat: Well, make this dream a reality. Make it possible!! Get your life back on track! Go to school, stay off the negative streets, get a part time job, get off probation and do what most young people do, live righteously! If you can do this, chances are greater that Africa will be in the equation down the road!

Not The Life

I feel like this ain't the life for me or any other of these young men in here with me. Some of us don't belong at home with our family to take care of our loved ones that need us right now. Half of us did and half of us didn't.

I was one of those people who hadn't been take care of all my business.

-Mario

From The Beat: Recognizing this, what will you do?

Get That Money!

Money is more important because it's more useful and you can do a lot of things with money. But then again you need time to spend your money. So to me time and money is both important because you need time so you can get some money you feel I thought you would. Get that money.

-Sweety

From The Beat: Exactly. One is useless without the other. This is the major complication in a question like this one.

Life

If my life were a soundtrack my theme song will be, "Presidential," by Young Dro. Because anything I want I can get my hands on it. You feel me. 'Cause on the outs I'm a moneyman, 'cause that's me and my squad get down.

My other choice of a theme song will be, "I hope I Make It," by Lil Boosie. That's 'cause things I be doin' on the outs. I be takin' chances but I always hope I make it, no matter what I do. And a song lets get me further.

-Smack

From The Beat: Those are your choices and we respect that. It's good to have music that we can relate to that motivates us. Hopefully they can also motivate you in other areas of life like school, family, a career, etc. There's more to life than money, but when we have none, or very little, we can see why that would be the main focus. However, don't let that "money" and the "chances" you take to get it be your downfall!

The Important Thing In My Life

I think that my family is the important thing in my life because they trying to help me with a lot of things, like getting' me out of jail.

My mom is the one that I love the most because she do anything for me. One day I was sick and she made me a pizza just to see me happy, and I never going to forget that. My dad, I like him too. He is trying to get me out of here. my sister, she is like cat and dog but I got love for her to.

-Luan

From The Beat: Family is something that you're stuck with your whole life. Friends come and go, girlfriends come and go, but family is always there. So you're pretty damn lucky that you've got one that is supporting you, even when you mess up. Now it's time to show them respect by making wise decisions.

Beat With-Interview

Can you tell us anything about your father?

No

Tell us about your mom?

Orphan, Italian descent, born in Oakland, raised in Oakland, favorite color is black.

How is she like you?

Our eyes. And we're both sick (crazy, vicious). We both like fashion, we're mature, we've got a laid-back personality.

How is she not like you?

She's a woman and she's older.

What about her personality? How is that not like you?

Co-dependent, caring, selfless, independent

-Mainy Hyena

From The Beat: This is exactly the kind of interview that makes us wish you wrote for us more often, young Artist/Mainy Hyena. Your Mom sounds like a fascinating character (crazy, but also laid-back? Vicious, but also caring? Co-Dependent, but also independent?) And does this mean you think you yourself are not caring or selfless? Does that mean you think you're the opposite, caring and selfish? There's so much to unpack in this little piece, it's like a stuffed suitcase with more suitcases inside. Tell us more!

Be My Valentine

dear beat within
this is momo
i told the girl "be mine"
he said "be what"
i said be my valentine
not just for the gifts
but for your beautiful ways
i miss you so much
i miss your ways
i like your style
i like her class
but most of all I like her ass

-Momo

From The Beat: Lust has a place in the palace of love, but exaggerate its pull, and love will leave you a broken-hearted fool.

I Just Want To Say

What's up Beat? Man this is hella bootsy. I just want to say stay up and do your program. Holla

-Sisco

From The Beat: What's "hella bootsy"? Are you referring to the halls and being incarcerated? If so, then why do you choose to do things that get you incarcerated? Is it "bootsy" enough to make you not want to come back? We'd hope so!

Yeah What It Do?

I'm at the sideshow goin' dumb, yokin' them Caddy's

Lil' mama in the backseat an' the back look cloudy
She want me so bad lil' mama get rowdy
Lean wit' it rock with' it, brah swang a stang
Show 'em what it do I'll show you how I hang
Where my money at girl 'fore this thang get crazy
What you woofin' fo' boy, what you scared fo'
I see yo' girl so ugly she remind you of a scarecrow
Damn tho'!

But my baby mama sexy always sending me texts
What it lay Lil' T baby you comin' through with yo' Lexus

A rack fo' a ring lil' ma would you accept this
Gettin' hungry gotta rack back fo' my breakfast
Bottle of some Hennessy Lil' T pour it
Gotta better rap fo' ya -- but you ain't ready fo' it.

-Lil' T

From The Beat: As always your lyrical skills dazzle - and we find ourselves wanting to print everything you write just for its style and original rhymes... (texts/lexus/accept this/ breakfast - WOW!)... but then when we reread your work we then think what are you actually promoting here? Insulting a girl, making your value all about money (Lexus? The people you want to be close to are the ones who aren't impressed by fancy cars), breaking the law, needing to smoke or drink to have a good time, and earning cash in a way that is sure to hurt you in the long run. You have so much insight and smarts, especially looking at your other flow, "The Streets," a devastating portrait of how bad it is there. But here's what's messed up: It's the lifestyle you're flaunting in this rap that is responsible for the misery in your other one!

No Idea When I'm Getting Out

I've been at camp for almost nine months and I have seen everybody at camp come. I have no idea when I will be getting' out.

I was told it could be up to three more months, but I'm just gonna keep going to college and when I get out I will have my own apartment, so I keep my head up and just know they can't keep me forever.

-Day

From The Beat: As long as you stay positive, like you seem to be doing here, they really can't keep you here, you're right. Better yet, they can't keep you back. We hope you do go to college, and when that happens, drop us a line for The Beat Without, so other young people can follow in your inspiring footsteps!

Peace God

I need the silence man
this place is hellah violent,
and while I'm tryin' to think
these ninjas stay steady fighting
I'm layin' in my cell tryin' to think
why I'm here in the first place
but God you help me out on my worst days
and man it's my worst day
Yea yea they say they gone be there
to be my mouth when I can't talk
my legs when I can't walk
my arms when I'm too weak
to grab what I can't reach
God all I want is peace.

-Andre

From The Beat: Maybe the best peace you can find is peace within yourself. Some things we have no control over, like the things that go on around us. As you're proving right now, you don't have to be a part of that chaos though. One thing you can control is yourself and the way you feel. Sounds complicated right, however, it is possible.

Just Droppin' In

What up Beat? It's yo' boy Indio, just want to drop in and say what up to all that are locked up.

-Indio

From The Beat: Boring. Hopefully you find some inspiration to write a more meaningful piece.

Free Us

What it is to all my bros' that's down right now? Y'all just keep y'all heads up and keep it solid. Stay up. Free all of us fast like this.

-Ray Ray

From The Beat: Normally we don't publish pieces that don't go into full-detail about what the writer is writing about, but we'll make an exception for your piece because when one is doing time, words of support are like gold. It's all good if your homies "keep it solid" and things of that nature, but what you really should be telling your homies is to give this crap up. Be the quarterback of your team and not a follower. Set the example.

The Hall

What is it like to be in the Hall? Being in the Hall is like being in hell. In the Hall, you can't see your family, you can't be with your girl, and your friends. You have to wear clothes that are not yours and shoes that are not yours. You have to ask to do everything you want to do. You get home sick all the time. It's hard for me, but to some, they like it and that is not cool at all.

-Donte

From The Beat: Damn; to compare Juvenile Hall to being in hell must mean that Juvy sucks. Why do you think anyone would like being locked up? Let those who enjoy being locked up do what they do. Focus on doing your time and getting out so you can wear your own gear. When you get out, let those who have never been locked up know what's up. Did you ever have someone tell you what being locked up was like? If you didn't, would it have made a difference in your life?

Messin' Up

To all in the Hall, what it do. I miss y'all this is Lil' Sheiking. They got yo' boy in camp and I'm lightweight messing up. Y'all stay and pimp that Hall shhh. I'm gon' be cool up in here because I don't want to go back to the Hall, but when they open the new hall, I'm gon' mess up so I can see what y'all working with.

So I love all my ninjas, and RIP to my fallen soldiers. I love y'all and y'all will never be forgotten.

-Lil' Sheiking

From The Beat: Hang in there - and if you really want to see it, get out and come through on a visit when they do open house, but PLEASE don't mess up on purpose... there is a huge glorious world out there, don't let the system shrink it for you.

My Theme Song

Underappreciated Geniuses

-Jacob

From The Beat: There's a home for your genius right here in the pages of The Beat Within. We'll print it, we'll read it, we'll appreciate it. That's what The Beat is all about!

Being Locked Up

If you want to know what being locked up is like, it really ain't shhh. You just got to watch out for snitch ninjas who will smile in your face, but get on some grimy shhh behind your back.

Ninjas like to run they mouth and all that ol' trick shhh, but forget them. Just do you and make sure you keep it solid.

This time really ain't shhh. You just got to be strong because in here, only the strong ninjas survive.

-Ray Ray

From The Beat: So if you were doing 100 years, would you say the same thing? Being locked up is something serious whether you're doing one minute or life. Life is not meant to be lived behind bars. One day behind bars can turn to 30, 30 can turn to a year, etc. if you act out. Being locked up is nothing to be proud of. Being locked up does not make you hard; it makes you the system's B.I. Analyze what you wrote in this piece because you may fake the funk on paper, but you can't lie to yourself.

Court

I go to court on the 21st. I think the judge gone send me to L-A (Boy Republic). I want to get on E-M, but whatever the judge 'bout to do, he needs to hurry up 'cause I'm tired of sitting in here.

-Dennis

From The Beat: Why do you think the judge is going to send you to L.A.? How would you react if the judge did do this? Why do you want to get on E.M.? Have you told your attorney this is what you want? Regardless of what the judge does, complete your program. If you're tired of sitting behind bars, then do your time. Period. Don't act out, get into any fights, and follow instructions and, before you know it, your nightmare will be over and you can put all this behind you.

Advice

What's up Beat, this is Grim from Hayward up at Camp.

Well I'm pissed off up here, I got two write-ups for talking when I wasn't even talking. I wanted to write a grievance, but I knew it wouldn't work.

My badge level froze, and I'm going to be a Blue Three for another week. I tried to talk to them, but they wouldn't listen. This sucks, getting blamed for something you didn't do. So whoever is coming to camp, make sure you follow directions of look to see if you're being watched to do something, because you can get easily set up or caught up in the act. Well that's all I know 'till pencil meets paper.

-Grim

From The Beat: You just summed up perfectly the meaning of losing your freedom - that feeling that your future, your choices, are being limited by an authority you have no power over. Like you said, even if you think you're doing what you need to do, it still all goes wrong. Give yourself props though, for keeping your cool and staying on point even when you are po'd. That's exactly the kind of grown-man maturity that will help you find and keep your freedom.

My Name Is...

Ant
Black Hood
Gold teeth
Jays on my feet
Fitted cap
Pockets on fat

I don't like ice in my drinks 'cause my grill icy
Lil' dude's hyphy it's ya girl on my bumper 'cause
I pulled up spinnin'

And she gave me the number. I didn't even start spittin'.

-Ant

From The Beat: We dig the short scattato rhymes. Meaning-wise, we're waiting to see what's under the surface. Don't keep us waiting for too long!

When I Was Trying To Tell My Mom

I would ask her, "What are you worth?" and "How could you call yourself a parent, when you don't know anything about the person you call your son?"

-Sisco

From The Beat: What was her response? We don't know the full details, but what made you ask her that in that way? Were you just to a point where you couldn't take it anymore and just had to ask, or know? Did you ever make an honest, serious attempt to talk to her about this before? How do you think she feels about you being incarcerated? Obviously you're free to do as you please, but don't you think that she may blame herself for some of the problems you're going through.

If I Were A Soundtrack

My theme song would be, "Untitled," because that's the way I am. I would have to be the whole CD 'cause once you get use to a song, it changes, and another one comes on. That's how I am. I change but the songs only get better.

-Young Money

From The Beat: That's a unique, different perspective that you've taken. What "CD" is similar to what you just mentioned? So, since you "get better," what are some of the things we should be on the lookout for? Are you going to be one with longevity, or a one hit wonder?

What's Your Theme Song?

If I were a soundtrack my theme song would be, "Lil' Wayne -Carter."

-Lil' Wayne fan

From The Beat: We wish you could have at least shared a little more on why you chose this. Like where you first heard it at, what part of the song you felt the most, etc. That would've given us a better understanding?

If Your Life Was A Soundtrack...

My theme song is the song by, "Lil' Boosie - Hope I Make It" and the song "Beef With Me," and "Webbie" call "G-Shhh."

-Smash T

From The Beat: Those are a lot of different songs that you can relate to. Some of them we're familiar with, and some we aren't too familiar with. It would have been nice if you elaborated a little on why you relate to those songs. Especially for the ones we're not familiar with. That way we would have been able to understand a little bit more.

A Chance To Speak, But You Couldn't

I always feel like that all the time when I'm around adults. Some adults in my family like my uncle, every time I'm doing me, ain't getting into no funk, he always got to say something. The only thing why I don't say nothing because he is my uncle, but it's all respect, but I don't trip no more, but it used to make me mad.

-Julius

From The Beat: We feel like it's time you expressed to your uncle how you feel when he says something for no reason. We understand that you don't say anything because he is your uncle and respect him, but the only way you'd be disrespecting if you said something is if you cuss, get loud, and don't allow him to say his piece. If your uncle gets mad at you because you came at him like a normal, calm person, explaining to him why you feel the way you do, then your uncle is the one disrespecting you. There's a way to talk to people and there's a way not to. If you feel strong about something, let it be known because if you don't say something, how do you expect other people to know how you feel?

Valentine

Girl, why don't you be my Valentine today so we can make sweet love all damn night till next the day? Then, you got to go 'cause my main chick is on my way, so get your stuff and get out, but don't forget we made love last night, and tell your ninja don't slip up and get caught because Meine Bo is coming fo' that number one spot.

-Maine Bo

From The Beat: Don't you already have a Valentine: Your main chick? What would happen if your main chick caught you in the act with another chick? Would she get up and go or stay? If you really love this girl, don't do anything to jeopardize your relationship because once she's gone, she may never come back and you're the one left wishing she never left. Cherish what you have before someone else does it for you.

Checkin' In

Tim: Clyde, what's up ninja?
Clyde: What's good with you?
Tim: Shhh, just makin' it do what it do.
Clyde: Like that? Stayin' pump?
Tim: Yeah man, tryin' to keep these suckas off my back.
Clyde: That's the only thing you can do.
Tim: How you feel about the move to that new thang?
Clyde: I don't feel nothing about it.
Tim: Bump it, huh? Shhh, but what that be like?
Talk to yo' peoples.
Clyde: Shhh, 'bout that action.
Tim: Shhh, that's what's up. Tb ninja, how you livin'?
Tb.: Larger than life, my ninja. Shhh, how we all livin'?
Tim: Clyde ninja, take it back to the drought. Tell these ninjas how the birds gone fly.
Clyde: It's this new shhh and you got to buy it from us.
Tim: Ha, ha, ha. I feel that. I mean, we hot, ninja.
T.B., ninja, tell these ninjas the procedure.
Tb: Man, get down or lay down, but we out, man.
Much love

-Tim, Clyde, and Tb

From The Beat: Well, we're glad to see that y'all got each other to turn to behind bars. Having a friend behind bars is more valuable than all the diamonds in the world, right? However, in y'all interview, y'all are talking about nothing but straight nonsense. If it wasn't for us wanting y'all to read our response, this piece would have never reached our printers. Stick to rhyming and not slanging. You can go places being in the studio, but the only place(s) y'all are going to go being on the grind is behind bars, in a hospital bed, or six feet under the dirt. This is real talk coming from Beat Within records, (established in 1996) so listen and learn or learn the hard way and find yourself saying, "Man, I wish I would have...."

Be My Valentine

I think it's important to show your love because, "How would you feel if the girl that you care about didn't show you nothing?" To show love on Valentine's Day, I would take her to the movies and buy everything she wanted. After that, I would take her out to see the whole city. After that, we would dip to the house. Then, I would run some bath water for her. We would relax. After that, I would let her treat herself with gifts and it would be all good. This is if I was married.

-Julius

From The Beat: The question you posed on your opening line is very real. The answer is: Not that good. Valentine's Day is definitely a day when many people show their love for someone, but you shouldn't have to wait for Valentine's Day to come to do this. You should do this everyday. However, your description of what you would do for Valentine's Day with your loved one is very sweet. We know she'd like it. Do you ever see yourself getting married? If so, when?

Addicted to Love

What's good Beat? This Savage, and this is to that special one:

I miss you every second of the day.
Wishing time goes on faster than yesterday,
I miss looking into your sexy eyes and your looking straight into mines.
It's like if you're my drug and your lips my addiction.
Because every day that goes by I need you more and more.

-Savage

From The Beat: Hope you're OK with the title we picked, it was the one that seemed to go best with the passion of your love poem!

Valentine Day

Hey Beat! This ya boi Y-E-REE from Oakland. Today I want to talk about love because today's the 13th of Feb, and tomorrow is the 14th Valentines Day. That's my favorite holiday. I don't care what no one say. I don't care how bad or mad, or big you are, you are always going to love someone. Yeah, I'm hyfee, but so what who care. I show in the hell don't.

See, like me, I will say Happy Valentine to anyone. If it's a boy, or a girl, I will say Happy Valentine. Don't get me wrong, I'm not gay, that what I aint. But it will be good to say it because that person might be feeling sad, or left out. You don't know, so just say Happy Holiday. It might make that person happy, you feel what I'm saying.

If you are in juvenile hall, or camp, say Happy Valentine to staff, or family members, or friends. I'm going to tell all the female staff Happy Valentine Day and get a huge yadiddamean! Because the female staff stay on me, yeeeee!

Well, I want to tell the girls that's locked up right now Happy Valentine Day. Hope your lover wrote you a letter. If he didn't, he cheatin' on you with the next breezy and wish you will get at yadiddamean. And for the guys, Happy Holiday and hope your girl write you. If she don't, well you know, it's valentine and she found her another one. I'm sorry to say but it's true, yadiddamean.

Well, I want to say Happy Holiday to my ninja that's up at camp right now and keep ya head up. I'm still putting it down yee! Well, this player is out.

-Y-e-ree

From The Beat: Thank you for sharing your holiday spirits with everyone. It's true how a saying can lift someone's spirit and it's good that you're willing to do so. We wish you the same and hope that next year you're able to enjoy your "favorite holiday."

Why Do Drugs Make People Do Certain Things?

For one example: When people are on drugs, it's because they have money from friends or family. People on drugs, promise they're going to do favors for their family and loved ones and don't, or forget, 'cause of drugs. Drugs messes up people's families, life, and careers. It's happened in my family and others as well. You know what the funny thing is? How people make excuses on how it takes away the pain, but in an hour or two, it's going to be gone, and you going to be looking for how to get high again, and you ain't going to care who you're going to hurt. Well, that's all I got to say.

-Ali

From The Beat: It is very sad what drugs do to a human being, but instead of criticizing that person and driving them deeper into the abyss for what they do, one should show that person love and compassion. The observation you made about what's funny about people who do drugs, highlights what an addict is: A person who looks for excuses and blame others for their habit but themselves. Do you still stay in contact with those family members who have a substance problem? We hope you do because if their own family won't help them, who will? Take care and we hope that you learn from others experience that doing drugs are not and they never will? Have you ever experimented with drugs yourself? What kind? Why?

Don't forget you got family when you get out.

Someone Who Doesn't Know...

I would say that bein' locked up is not something to be proud of. If you did something to be in jail and it's not the place that you want to be, and have to end up having to come here more than once, it's not good to come back to juvy over and over again. I have been to the hall 8 times and I'm tired of it.

So, if it is your first time, let it be your last time because jail is not the place to be.

To those that are in max waiting to go to CYA, stay up and don't try to get more time. Don't forget you got family when you get out. So stay out of jail. Well Beat, I am out

-Ryan

From The Beat: Do you think that if someone gave you the same advice you would have come back? What do you think contributed to you coming back the times you did? Hopefully you've given that some serious thought and can avoid making the same mistakes. What would you say to someone who questions you giving advice because of how many times you've been there? Thank you for sharing your experiences/with us all.

Happy Again

Man, it's ya' boy Whiteboy. I happy 'cause I'm about to get out! Yea! I'm about to go to a grouper! I tried to tell da judge, was up! A big part of me and I got a plan to succeed. Told her hell. All she had to say was a grouper will help me, when I just gave her a 5-page letter and two letters from the teachers. All she had to say was I need help from strangers and a foreign place.

When I gave her a list of like 40 people that could help me at my house, she think she know best for me when she don't know shhh about ya boi.

-White Boy U3

From the Beat: We had to take out the last couple of lines, Whiteboy, because we don't think writing such things is in your best interests. The fact that you could get 40 people and two teachers to support you, and write a 5-page letter, tells us that you can make the most out of whatever situation you have to deal with. Who knows, maybe it won't be what you expected at all. You might even like it.

Tryin' To Go To Y-Tec

Yeah, man, dis ya boy Curt once again. I'm tryin' to go to Y-Tec. They trying to send me to group home shelter on some weak stuff like they can't send me home. Talking about I'm too dangerous for the streets and shhh like that. You know how dey try to keep us locked up.

But yeah, man, keep yo' head Dis Lil' Curt. I'm out. Holla. Hopefully I do the program. And get back out to the block.

-Lil' Curt U3

From the Beat: And back to the block, and back to the lock-up and back and back and back. Why not tryin going forward for change? Yeah, we know how they try to keep you locked up, and we also know how many of you give them all the reasons they need to do it! So tell us, just how did the court get the idea that you are "too dangerous" to go back to the streets?

Being In Here Too Long

Man, what's up with da Beat though. Me, I been in here fo' too long though. It's about to be Valentine's day and I got to be in here. Man. I need to get out of here. Man been in here too long!

-Daddy-O U4

From The Beat: For such a long time here, you sure give The Beat very little of your time! Five short sentences in nearly an hour's workshop tells us that maybe you aren't putting in the effort you need to. You haven't even touched on the important questions of what you will change so that you don't have to "suffer" through any more lock-up time. If you don't know what you plan to do differently, or if you don't plan to change anything, then the time you've done so far is really short, because you haven't used it wisely. So, let us know, what happens after the hall?

Not Just A Label

What's up beat? This is the one and only Bilitant out here still in San Francisco jail holdin' it down.

Too Militant is what I change my name to 'cause everywhere I go, people tell me I'm "too militant." So I took it upon myself to look it up in the dictionary. Guess what I found? Words that best describe me: "angry, aggressive and war like." I thinking this is what best describe me.

But then I think this is not what I wanna be 'cause that a bad life to live. But now I just accept who I am and I also feel that my name should be what describe me best because I honor myself and respect myself. Name is me and not just a label. So that why I'm come correct. I'm gone. Stay safe.

-Too Militant U3

From The Beat: But to us, that word always suggests a powerful reason, often a great cause to be "angry, aggressive and war like" about, someone who believes in something so strongly that the idea is worth more than life itself. If that describes you, tell us the idea about which you are Too Militant.

Love Is

Love is a matter of action not words or deeds. Love could be a matter of words, but action speaks louder than words. It is important to say I love you to the people that you love. But showing your love by action is more important than just saying it.

I have showed my love to the people that I love except for my parents and my whole entire family. And for my girlfriend, I have both showed her and told her. So my point is action speaks louder than words. Happy Valentines Day I Love You Baby.

-Lil' Jacky U3

From the Beat: This is one of those "ironic" situations where the words you write speak of action, but the place you've allowed yourself to be put only has the opportunity for words. If you want to put your 'action speaks louder than words' philosophy into practice, you'd better figure out how to stay with those that you love.

A Changed Man

The things I would tell to my love ones is that this experience has made me grow up and see things different in a whole otha way. Also taking things for granted like talking on the phone, catting how I want just my freedom, period. Man, this experience will change me forever, socially, personally, and just all around of my life.

-Young G U4

From The Beat: How do you see things different now, after the experience of being locked up? We're interested in your description of the social and personal changes you see happening inside you, and what it will mean when you get out of here. (We had to change your Beat name because we can't print your real last name.)

Being Locked Up Once Again

Once again I'm back for running from a group home. They putting people in here with other charges, but they getting out before me. I been a here long time because of a damn group home. That ain't coo' being in here for that, but I'm out on that note.

-D-M U3

From the Beat: Tell us, is there anything that it's cool to be in here for? If you ran from a group home, don't say you're here because of them. You're here because of you. You knew the consequences before you ran, and now you have to accept them.

Hard Times

My theme song will be "Hard Times" because of everything I have been through in my life. It was one song that I made to show what people have and don't have. How I grew and came up in the gutter, just lookin' for a way out. Knowing there's a way out. It's just dead, or alive.

-Steven U2

From The Beat: So which way out would — will you — you choose? Will it be "dead," or will it be "alive?" We all go through "Hard Times" in life, some more than others. It actually helps shape us into what we become. You do have a choice though, and we hope you know and believe this!

At Night

At night I just sit and think about what my life has come out to be. I think about what I did this summer and how it can affect the rest of my life. It's like this one sin has poison my life. So now I have to think 'bout everyone I ever trusted as an enemy. Can't trust some of the people I love the most 'cause it might be a set up.

I also think to myself I should be scared, but to me, I really think I can over come this by rage and guns. Sometimes I think about how my ninja Lil' Dave got killed while I was in jail.. I really want to be through with life. but until life goes, I'm gone.

-Too Militant U3

From The Beat: Partly for your sake and partly for ours, we took out your threats. And we are sorry that you feel you've poisoned your life, and that Lil' Dave paid with his life. But how can you look at that tragedy and truly believe that "rage and guns" can overcome anything that lasts longer than a moment? Can't you see that the pain your feeling is the only product of "rage and guns"? Is this the answer to our question above? Is revenge the idea you're "Too Militant" about? That's an idea too many people your age have already died for.

Stay Out, Baby Girls

Man, I'm just sayin' dough, what's the word? I'm just sayin' I always speak my mind to a baby girl or anyone. But I'm sayin' to the baby girl, man, don't come to the halls. That shhh ain't good. Man, make this your last time comin' here.

Baby girls, man, stay out of here because I don't wantta see you in jail because I'm sayin' if you was on my mind, I wouldn't want you in here. So stay out and go somewhere. I mean go somewhere, baby girl.

All right, for these ninjas stay out. I'm out.

-Neily M U4

From The Beat: We have only one criticism of this piece, and that is that it's advice that should not just apply to the girls. We don't want to see you or any child, girl or boy, locked up. So take a piece of your own advice, and stay out!

I'm So Hood - 50

If my life was a soundtrack my theme song would be — "I'm So Hood" by 50 Cent because that's all I know is the 'hood. I love that place. That's where I come from, that's where I had my first fight. I'm a star in the 'hood. Man I'm just so 'hood, like my man 50.

-Baby Harlem U2

From The Beat: It's good that you love where you came from because some may not. But how do you show that love back to your 'hood? Do you help to build or tear down your 'hood? A lot of people express their love in different ways. We hope that you're able to express your love in a way that's not negative to those who are still there! Plus, it seems like you should connect the dots between being "a star in the 'hood," and being where you are right now where the only stars are wearing some other boys drawes and answering to a bunch of strangers. Can you be a "star" on the street without being a slave in the system?

What Would Your Theme Song Be?

Mac Dre — "Get Cha Chip." The song to me is saying, get your chip and keep stacking it. But do it with a job first and then do ya hustle, and be by yourself, be a square.

Lil' Wayne — "Grown Man." You want to be with that one lady, but you want to get that money at the same time. Then you stuck. You don't know if you want yours or money.

-Clint U2

From The Beat: We couldn't really understand your last line about, "you want yours or money?" It seems both songs motivate you to get that money. Is having a job considered a hustle? It's good to have a hustle because we all need that money to survive. However, if that hustle involves possibly getting locked up — or worse — then is it really worth it?

I been a here long time because of a damn group home.

A Rap About Me

A young ninja, fightin' in a world so cold
Been hustlin' since seven years old
Now I'm older, lookin' back
To the days before I ever thought of strap
When all I wanted to do is play
Until my homie, Ray Ray, passed away
Now I'm olda, and the world is so colda
Can't chill without lookin' ova my shoulda
RIP, Chedda

Now he gone, nothin' helps me feel betta
Now I'm locked up in unit 3
Thinkin' if I wasn't here, where would I be?
Would I be on my way?
Or gettin' lit up with a K?
Now I gotta go and pray
That I live to see the next day

-Young Harlem Boy U3

From The Beat: When you pray to live another day, do you also pray for the strength to make the changes you need to make so that your first prayer has a chance of being answered? What are those changes? Are you going to make them?

Time Or Money

What's good with The Beat this ya boi Twon coming from that good Unit 3 status, fo' real fo' real. Well, I'ma 'bout to put you up on game on this topic right here, yo. To me, they both the same, but time is a little bit more important than money 'cause in order to make money, you got to have patience and time. For example, the old saying is that time is money and money is time.

But then money is important too, 'cause if you don't have money, you don't get clothes, house, shoes or anything else that you need that cost money.

-Twon U3

From The Beat: You're right, Twon, they're both important. But in the end, when time runs out for all of us, money seems very, very unimportant.

Time Over Money

I rather choose time 'cause money always going to be there. but time ain't. So that just me.

-Cori U3

From The Beat: We know you can write more than this, Cori. Even though we think you're right about time being more important than money (especially when you run out of time), we don't think you can explain yourself in just two sentences, and explaining things is what The Beat is all about. When you put in only the minimum effort, you only get the minimum rewards.

My Last Stop

Man, what's up wit' The Beat. Man, this Baby Grimey once again just checkin' in, ya heard. I see the rest of my squad in these new halls.

Man, the judge said this my last stop. I'm finna be in CYA for a minute, but I'ma see if I could go to 850 'cause I'm 17 and a half, so I'm finna sav it out ya, heard.

And to my squad, when y'all ninjas get out, man, don't be no stick up stars, man. It's otha ways to get money, man.

If y'all don't know, I'm a daddy now. I'm not gonna rob nobody, but I'ma start hustling, man. But I'm gonna be down for a while, but stay up brahs. We ain't on this grind for nothing, so get your hustle up.

-Baby Grimey U4

From The Beat: We're sorry you're on your way to the Y, especially now that you're a daddy. We can't help but think about that new baby growing up without a father, and wondering when that cycle will be broken. We see a change in you when you advise your boys to stop their stick-ups and make their money some other way, but we don't know what you mean when you say you're planning to start a new hustle. If that's the kind of hustle that leads to locked rooms inside locked prisons, then what's the point? Why not try to learn a marketable skill in the Y (if they teach any) so you can hustle the legit way when you touch down? When you get there, write us so and spit some game to the youngsters, so we can publish it in The Beat Without.

Just a Little Note

In a world where evil lurks on every street corner, and peace within one self is a hard thing to come by, we must travel beyond mere existence and live our lives to the fullest the best we can.

-P Rush U3

From The Beat: But how do we live our lives to the fullest? What is your definition of "mere existence" and living life "to the fullest?"

Change Or The Same

Me, I'm gonna stay the same 'cause changing will come in my life! If I stay the same, God will have me change when it's time. Like now I wanna change, but if they send me to a grouper, how I'm gon' change? I ain't gon' open up to no stranger, fo' sho, fo' sho.

If I'm gonna change, I'm a do it myself with help from the people I want help from, not some bs people who don't know me! It's they job to try to help us when they don't know us. They just supposed to try to get to know us when they could not give a damn 'bout us if we get popped. They still gon make they money nevadaless.

I say if we stay ourself, we will do what was meant to be done wid yo' life 'cause God gon make it so that things happen for a reason. So continue wid your life 'cause if you is meant to change, you will, if not you ain't. So just do what ya head an' ya heart tell ya to do 'cause that's what you was meant to do!

-Young White Boy U3

From The Beat: How do you think God let's you know it's time to change? Could it be when you get locked up strangers tell you what you can and can't do? Could it be when a youngster, especially one that is close to you, loses everything to the streets and is heard from no more? Could it be when someone comes into your world, whatever you might believe about them (by judging them from the outside) and offers something new? It seems to us that God has been speaking to you in a variety of ways, but you have chosen not to listen. Do you think those who've paid the price with their lives or their freedom were simply meant to die or be locked up forever, that it was God's decision to make them slaves or put them in their graves? We can't accept that for ourselves, because it takes away the gift of choice and free will, which is what we thank God for. Do you think it's possible to disrespect God?

My Homie Chedda

My homie Chedda was a real big homie. He would always make you laugh and when he would see me on the block, he would tell me, "Go home! It's too dangerous," and I wouldn't listen and just chill with him.

I remember I told him where some girls were. He took my bike and went up there. I used to chill with him every day. Now he's gone and all I got is memories, like when my old girlfriend (Chedda's sister), me and Chedda, we went dumb on a cable car.

Ever since he's gone my life changed. Now I don't tolerate nothing no more. I want to thank God. I was one block from his house when he got shot right in front of his house. I turned around and ran. Thank the Lord that I didn't leave the house a few minutes earlier 'cause I might be gone right now. But now he's gone, I feel like I'm not complete.

-Young Harlem Boy U3

From The Beat: We hate to read these tragic stories of young men gone forever, and we're sorry you have to bear the pain of his loss. We're glad you're thanking God for sparing your life, but what is included in your "Thank you" to God? Do you think that chance he's given you to continue living comes with any conditions? Does God want something from you? Have you thought about it? What do you come up with when you do think about it? Maybe it's God's plan that you turn your life around so that you can live a very long time and keep Chedda alive in your heart and in your memory. You have our sympathy.

Another Note

Things have been so hard for a race of misused and rejected people that our African-American families today are still suffering. The streets can make you and the streets can break you. The way you play the game is up to you.

-PRush U3

From The Beat: What turns a good piece into a great piece is the explanation that goes with it. That requires more than just words like "the way you play the game is up to you." It requires telling us what you mean by that. It's not enough to write, "the streets make you and the streets can break you." It requires more... did the streets make you? Who are you that the streets made? What are the continuing legacies of the "misused and rejected" African-American families that have affected your life? You have a lot you could draw from, if only you would do it. This is your opportunity to teach; you can't teach much of anything in three sentences.

Big Bra

Man, I miss my big bra. He been gone for a year now. But you know, man, I really looked up to him on the block an' shhh like that. But that shhh ain't cool, 'cause ever since that happened, I been on some other shhh. I just can't wait to get back on the block cause I'm missing it an' it's missin' me. RIP Dre Da Fool.

-Lil' Junk U3

From The Beat: No, the block doesn't miss you, even though you think it does. The block thrives on children willing to sacrifice their lives, like your big brother did. We're sorry for your loss, but we're even sorer for the loss suffered by Dre's mother. Have you given a thought to your mother, and what you owe her? Is that why you say nothing about going back to those that really do miss you, but only about the street that leaves youngsters dead or enslaved?

Locked Up Once More

Yeah, it's ya boy Young Choppa. I'm locked up again in this thang, but I ain't trippin'. They played us out our phone calls on Saturday, and today they played us out our P.E. and I don't be feelin' that. But this is the halls, what could I say? But keep yo' head up. You in here, and don't let nobody run over you 'cause they gon keep doing it, including da staff.

-Lil' Curt U3

From The Beat: So you got yourself locked up again, but you "ain't trippin'." That's too bad. You should be. Looks to us like no one is running over you but you! How could "they" be playing you if you never gave them the power to do it? It starts with you, Lil' Curt. When you realize that, you'll stop coming back!

Money's More Important

Man what's up with The Beat. Man, money is more important than time because in here doing time right about now man. 'Cause me, Daddy-O, I been in here for like five months now and they ain't trying to let me out. But money is the main thing to me. You can't buy stuff with time. I mean time is important to me but not in here. 'Cause you can't get time back. But I got to have that loot ya dig.

-Daddy-O U4

From The Beat: So, even though you can always get money back (no matter how many times you lose it), it is more important to you than time, which you can never get back no matter how much money you have? We wonder how much thinking you did to come up with this. Do you think your mother agrees with you? Would she rather spend time with you, or would she prefer to spend your money while you're locked away from her? When time runs out, how important will money be?

Responsible?

Man what's good? This ya boy Baby Grimey back up in this bullshh-ass juvie justice center bull. I'm hella mad though. I'm gonna be 18 in 11months and my baby just made three months, and I'm still down wit' that grimey shhh because when I do come home I ain't got shhh comin', so I'ma have to hustle to keep my baby fitted. I'm responsible so I gotta take care of the BM even though I love my girls that I got now, ya dig.

Man, when I get out I'm just gonna hustle and mess wit' ma girls, ya feel me, man. I'm moving 'cause ninjas tryna beef wit' me for nothing, so I'm moving on up.

-Baby Grimey U4

From The Beat: We're truly interested to know how you define being "responsible." It appears you think it's responsible to bring a baby into the world, and — as long as you can buy Pampers — you can mess with a bunch of girls not related to your baby, you can physically abandon your baby because the streets meant more to you than the baby did, you can plot your future life of crime and hold your boys up high, when all along the one thing that child needed more than all your words and all the Pampers in the world was a father at home, guiding his baby into childhood and beyond. Responsible? What dictionary are you using?

If I Can Start My Life From Scratch

You know, man, if I can start my life from scratch I wouldn't change shhh 'cause a ninja live this life to the fullest, feel me. Some people want to get a job, but the people wit the job don't want to give you a job because the way you look. But you know, a ninja got to have money so we get it how we live, feel me.

Parents ain't doin' everything for you, so what you gone do when you can't get a job but you can get some dope and a gun? You go get it how you live.

-Poon-G U4

From The Beat: The prisons are busting at the seams with men who once thought just like you do now, and who wish — too late — that they had prepared themselves to earn that necessary living in a different way. The cemeteries are full of children who will never grow to be men who thought just like you do now, and who — if they could wish — would want to change lots of things in their lives so they could continue living. What does it mean to live your life to the "fullest" if much of it is spent as a slave of a system that tells you what to wear, what to eat, when to speak, when to go to the bathroom and when to shower (with a bunch of other males)? What does living your life to the fullest mean if God intended you to spend 70 or 80 years here, but you never get there?

Indianapolis Vs. Chicago

Indianapolis won the Super Bowl. I knew they were gonna win because their team played pretty good this year! Everyone thought Chicago was gonna win, but they were wrong. I wonder who gonna be in next year's Super Bowl?

-Lil' Eric U5

From The Beat: Well, not everybody thought Chicago would win, but many people did. Who's your favorite team in the NFL?

Lonely

When I was lonely, I always talk to myself. I like to be lonely, because I would think about everything. Lonely can help me think about everything I do in the past. I always want to be lonely, because I want to think about my future. When I was lonely, I always feel good about myself.

-Laoto U5

From The Beat: We think you are mixing up two words: lonely and alone. We understand why being alone can help you think about your life. But lonely is a feeling, a state of mind that can happen whether you're with people or by yourself. Lonely is a feeling nobody really likes, even when they like to be alone.

Money Is Time

Time is money to Neil because that's the truth. No one don't want to do time. Everyone want money on some real shhh. Man hustla is bad man. Get a job. That is what it's about.

Man, it's time to change that life right now. Man, if you in here for a long time you will start knowing what jail all about. But for them newcomers they will start knowing about jail when they keep comin' back. But this is my last time in this hall. Stay up, ya heard me.

-Neily U4

From The Beat: If it's time to change, what are the changes you're planning to make? We know you can stay out this place, but we have heard so many youngsters promise that this is their last time... until we see them again. Are you going to be one of those? We sure hope not! Don't disappoint yourself. Go to school, learn some things you don't yet know, and prepare yourself for a real life in real freedom. Don't wait till your time runs out...

Time Is Money!

I feel that time is money
Because if you out there wasting time

Then you losin' money

Yeah, I think that sayin' is true

Mo' money, mo' problems

But when I have money

It solves my problems

Gettin' money is cool

But make sure you stay

On your p's and q's

If you hustlin' on the streets

Don't get caught up

But I can't leave the streets

'Cause that's where I was brought up

Back to money

It ain't funny

If you ain't got no money

Would you rather walk around broke?

Lookin' like a dummy?

No, 'cause bein' broke

Ain't the code

And dat's the only time

I gotta go into a jack mode

-JS U5

From The Beat: Yes, money is important to everyone, but is it more important than freedom? Than life? You are thinking like a child if you believe that you "can't leave da streets." Are you on the streets now? Of course not, you're locked up behind thick walls. The question is not whether you leave the streets, but only how you leave them. If you take some control of your life, and grow up to take some responsibility, then you can direct yourself into paths that lead to a decent future. If, on the other hand, insist on going into "jack mode," then you are prescribing a future of enslavement for yourself, in places that are so much worse than where you are now. We know this. We only hope you don't learn it the hard way.

Respect

I rather keep my life the same because I got a lot of respect in jail, or out of jail. I don't know why, I guess the stuff I did on the streets for the respect. But now when people see me they say that boy is crazy, but I take it as respect. Man, a ninja like me don't care, but now I feel stupid because I'm in hall and my ninja did not write me no letter to me for I can keep my head up. But when I get out I'm gone do right.

-Lil' T U4

From The Beat: We would like to know what you mean when you say you plan to "do right" when you get out. Maybe you are beginning to see that "respect" is much more than acting crazy and putting yourself in the hands of strangers (like those who tell you when to get up, when to shut up, etc.) How much respect do you think you really have when even your homie doesn't write you while you're locked up? Do you respect yourself? If the answer is yes, what do you find respectable? If the answer is no, tell us what you need to do to earn your own respect.

Money Is Better Than Time

Me, I say money is better because when you do time in here you get out, and when you get out you off top gone want some money. Money buy you things. Time can't do that.

Time let you live and money is worth living for. Time on the outs is good, so when I get out this time, I'm gonna use my time wisely. But ch'all know me. I'm always get that money. But still don't burn ya time.

-Spillz U4

From The Beat: We think it's sad that so many of you think of "time" as doing time behind bars. Time is something that moves forward at exactly the same speed for all of us, whether locked up or free, whether in this country or on the other side of the world. We're not saying that money is not important because it is. But when time runs out, as it will for all of us one day, what do you think will be worth more to you, the "fortune" you've managed to stash, or the life that just ended?

Changing Some Things

I wouldn't like to change everything, but I would like to change some parts in my life, like going to school. I missed a lot of school because I wanted to have a job and get money, and because I chose to work instead of getting my education. I have been in and out of juvenile because it is a violation of my probation.

-Chantel U5

From The Beat: Not going to school so that you can work is not just a violation, Chantel, it's not smart thinking because your education will allow you to get a much better job and earn much more money.

Today

Today I had a family visit with my aunt, uncle, cousins and lil' bra. It was good. I ate some pupusas. That go ya mean, horchada too, with some rice an' milk dat go. I felt good. I was in da unit feeling myself and me and my folks was chopping it up about everything and how I want to join the Marines. My uncle was happy to hear that, but he was telling me dat I need my door open for opportunity.

-Jason U6

From The Beat: It sounds like a great family reunion, even if it wasn't exactly where you wish to have such a reunion. What do you think your uncle was trying to tell you about keeping the door open for opportunity? Can you describe what horchada is made of?

Listening In On My Insults

Well yeah, I got a DRB because some staff heard me call her a name through some bullshhh-ass intercom system that dis new Juvl has in all the rooms. I was hella mad 'cause it's not like I said it straight to her face. They just decided to eavesdrop on me.

But whatever, I don't really don't care anymore. And yeah please don't write any bull shhh comments on my piece. Your comments aggravate me.

-M Mark U6

From The Beat: Sorry, but we always write comments on everything we publish. But if it makes you feel any better, your piece aggravates us as much as our comments aggravate you... Our view on this is that we would hate to have no privacy to express ourselves. We would hate to have our words heard when we didn't want them to be heard. But at the same time, we hate the words you used to describe this staff person. The words themselves are hateful (as you would instantly agree if they were applied to your mother or sister). While you can't do anything about the system that builds in listening devices in your room, you can do something about what you say about people, even people you don't like.

Money, More Important Than Time

To me, money is more important. Some may say it's my mentality but I don't care. This is how I look at it. It takes time to make money. If I had a lot of money, then I would value time. Since I'm one of the "Po" folk, I don't care about time. How I feel right now is that I will use all my time to make money whether it's a job, welfare, or other. I got too much time on hand regardless.

-Jung Te U6

From The Beat: How do you think your views will change when you no longer have "too much time on hand," when time is about to run out? How important will money be for you then? We do agree with you that it's easy for people with money to say they put more value on time. But even people without money value time a lot more when it's about to disappear.

Street Anthem

As you struggle to hustle, taking gain after loss
Don't get discouraged. Just remember who's boss.
Handle your business and always watch your back.
Don't sleep on the stick-up boys waiting to attack.
As you creep through the streets the dope fiends holler.
They've done any and everything just to give you that dollar.
I hope it will last. I hope you can make something of it.
Time will tell if something good came from it.
But as you count the highs, count the lows too,
And whatever you do, forever remain true.
This ain't no poem, it's 'bout the streets I roam.
But what choice do you have? It's in you by nature.
It's not your fault for being a player.
But remember one thing there always another choice.

-Bilitant U3

From The Beat: But if you always have a choice, how can being a player be a part of your nature? Yes, it's in you, but we think it was put there by circumstances and not be nature at all. If you had been taken at birth and raised by a rich family with all the advantages that money and a good education can buy, would you still be a player? In the end, though, by acknowledging that theirs is always another choice, you leave us to wonder whether you will make that other choice or not. What happens to the community if you feed the dope fiends for so you can get the things you want? What happens if you "remain true" to the game, but find yourself behind bars for years and decades? What game is that, and who wins? What are the lows that you have to count when you're calculating the value of the choices you make? What choices are you planning to make when you walk out of here?

Life Changes

I would not like to change my life because I feel like what I do is wrong, but since I am making these mistakes, I am learning from them. And since I am learning from them, so it is a chance that I won't make the same one.

-Young Ant U2

From The Beat: Learning from those mistakes is a way of changing, because it means you won't make the same ones over, and that is change. Are there parts of your life that you do want to change, like how you do in school, your relationships with family? Your relationship with God or your spiritual side? Are they all good, or could any of those use some improvement?

Leave My Life The Same

I would just leave how my life is, because if I change it, all the good times or stuff that happened to me would not be there anymore, and some of the good stuff meant a lot to me.

-Lil' Eric U5

From The Beat: Once again, we wish you would spend more time on one topic because we can learn almost nothing from one sentence! What were some of those good times? If you changed some things, isn't it possible could have avoided some of the bad times while creating different good times?

Time Won't Stop

Time is money and money is time but time is more important than money. Money comes with time and through time. It won't be another 2-6-2007 again. But there will be 2-6-2008, 2-6-2009 and 2-6-2010. There will never be another '07. Time won't stop for anyone, but money will.

-Quez U2

From The Beat: Time will stop one day for us all, and it won't matter how much money we have when it does. But in the meantime, what are we doing with the time that we have? Have you always thought of time like this? There's an old saying: "Time and tide wait for no man." So, since time won't wait for you, how are you using it to move yourself forward along with the hands of the clock?

Away From Home

I am only a year away from home. That is a long time to me. Ever since I went to high school, it seems my life was always away from home, always getting locked up, group home, or going to my friend's house to kick. Why can't I just stay home?

-Lil' Eric U5

From The Beat: A year is a long time, Eric, especially when you're separated from the ones you love. But to make this a much better piece, we wish you had tried to answer that question you end with. Even if you don't know the answers, we're sure you've thought about it. We would love to benefit from those thoughts.

Time Let's You Think

I feel money is a motivation
It get me through the day
It gets you what you want
Also what you need to get
Time is money
Time let's you think.

-Devon U3

From The Beat: If time let's you think, what are you thinking about? Are you thinking about the money you're making right this minute for all the people who "handle" you when you give them power over your life — the cops, the DA, the PD, the PO, the judge, the counselors — everyone but the people you want to help support? We hope you are, because if money is your motivation, you'll have a lot more time to think about where it's going.

Money

Who doesn't like money? I think if there was no money in this world, it would be better — less crimes, because most of the time youth get arrested for trying to make money on the block or what not. So money is what destroying our community.

-Lil' Eric U5

From The Beat: Maybe it is the lack of money that is destroying our communities... Really, it isn't money that hurts us, but our relationship to it. When we value money more than our own families or our own lives, then we're in deep trouble.

Keep My Life The Same

I would keep it the same but I would change all mistakes that I made in the past.

-Ivan U2

From The Beat: What were some of those mistakes? Wasn't there a lesson in some of those experiences? If you could wipe away all your mistakes, what type of life would you have now? But since you can't undo the mistakes of the past, how will you avoid making the same ones in the future? One last thing, Ivan: since you came up with only two sentences total (one for each topic), next time we want you to choose only one topic and write at least half a page! A lazy man gains nothing.

Three Topics In One

Money is time so I would call it money time.

I would change my life because the way my life is right now it's messed up and I rather change it good.

The most unforgettable character was a female that was so wild that I can't get that out of my memory bank.

-Mark d U6

From The Beat: We combined all three of your pieces into one, because each piece was only one sentence long! That is not what The Beat is. You could write much more about any one of the topics, which you definitely know. Next time, please don't write about all the topics. Choose the one that most appeals to you, and write at least a half a page (more is better) about it. One-sentence pieces are the lazy way out, and laziness will not get you very far in the world.

RIP Spank

I miss my friend Spank real much. It sucks that he's gone now and that's because he was took out the game by some soft punks. I miss smokin' weed with him. I miss playin' hoops with him. I miss drinkin' with him. I miss talkin' with him and shootin' dice with him, and all the other thing I missed. Spank we love you and you will be missed.

-Lil' Curt U3

From The Beat: Every week we read about these tragedies of young men killing young men. Does it matter whether those who took his life were "soft" or "hard" — he's gone for all time whatever you can about them. Do you think Spank would rather be remembered or be back on earth living his life? What about you?

Life

Life for me is hard to me. I don't feel like I should be here. Life on the streets is no game. Getting arrested for stupid stuff. Gang banging will get you killed and six feet under the ground. But when you out there, you don't think about that. All you think about is making money and staying away from the 5-0. See you later, Beat. Peace.

-Lil' Sneaky U3

From The Beat: Well, if you don't think about the consequences when you're out there, then you should cut this piece out and tape it to your bedroom mirror so you can remember what those consequences could be. You may think only about the money and staying away from the cops, but thinking about that didn't keep you away from them, did it? And the money you're making now, it's all going into their pockets!

Log Cabin Ranch

I think this one-year program is wack! One year is too long. Hopefully they change it. I've been here for two days. It's pretty cool, 'cause my friends from the outs are here, but they gonna be out soon. Well, that's it 'til next week.

-Lil' Eric LCRS

From The Beat: Your homies are about to go home because they realized if they messed up at the Ranch their times would keep getting extended. Lil' Eric, and they want to go home. The Ranch program has been recently lengthened from seven months, one week, to a year. But there is a lot you can learn down there and beautiful nature to enjoy—wild deer, turkeys, raccoons, as well as sports—basketball, baseball, soccer, etc. And there are a whole lot of wonderful guys down there who can become your friends. So can you relax and enjoy your program? We hope so!

Without Money, Time Will Go By Slower

Time or money? Both are a trip, because without money, time will go by slower. Without time, you can't make no money. I don't wanna live too long, because there's no point in living, 'cause you're just waiting to get old and die.

Time is precious to me, but as long as you have money, life is more easier. So time without money is worthless, because life is hard and you'll have a bad life. There's no point in living. I don't want to live in a homeless shelter because I can't take care of myself. I don't want to live a short life without money, I want to live a medium life, like to seventy years old, because if I lived longer, I'd be stuck in misery.

-Jason LCRS

From The Beat: Why do you assume that you're going to be poor all your life? Now that you have a lot of time down at the Ranch, why don't you assess your talents, skills, interests, and see what goals—some things that are legal—appeal to you? What kind of work appeals to you, that you can build a career around? You don't seem to be afraid of hard work, so can you use your imagination and think about what might work for you, as a way to earn money?

Change Crossed My Mind

What's up, man? This Young Jeff. You already know who I be--a young ninja fo' sure, feel me? I got four more months an' back to the block I go, so I'm a holler at y'all when I get out. But I still got time, so I'm gonna hit The Beat like normal.

Change crossed my mind, but I don't know if I can do it. I'm go be on my Ps and Qs off top, 'cause I know they got ninjas out there, tryna be like they on ma bump.

-Young Jeff LCRS

From The Beat: We know the intrigue, glory, maybe even the danger of the streets lures you, but you often write that you also know they can be your destruction. So now that you're at the Ranch, you have plenty of time to think about how you really can change. You can consider any kind of change you want, you can even start off changing one thing at a time, and you don't have to answer to your homies or anybody else, only to yourself. Can you at least try to give change a chance?

I Want My Life To Change

I want my life to change by getting out of here and being a changed man, and being a good father for my son, and getting a good job, and going to college, and getting a degree.

-Simon LCRS

From The Beat: Good thinking, Simon! How do you want to change yourself? Who do you consider yourself to be now and who do you hope to become? What kind of a job do you hope to get? What do you want to learn in college? Do you have any ideas about a career you'd like to build? Whatever, we wish you the best!

Time

I think time is better than money because you can get money back, when time is impossible to get back. That's why I think time is more important than money. Another reason is because time is short and you should cherish it.

-Anonymous U2

From The Beat: Sounds like you're using your brain. But since you're here, you apparently didn't cherish your time before, so what made your brain kick into gear? When you're out and able to make your own choices again, will you follow through with a plan, or is it just a thought?

If I Could Change My Life...

If I could change my life I won't change shhh. Same old 'hood, mane, same old click, same baby mama. Yeah I gotta kid. Still getting money. Yeah, we do it real big. Never change. Moms, she backbone. Pops was never there. Same 2pac slappin' in deck. I love this life. I'm not gone change shhh.

-Lil' Dar U2

From The Beat: Didn't you forget something about the life you don't want to change... locked doors, all male showers, nasty food, and stylish clothes that a lot of boys before you have had on their bodies. Same stuff equals same consequences, until they get worse. And what happens to those you love when you're away? What can you do for your baby when you're locked up? Nothing! Chances are your baby will also say, "Moms, she backbone, pops was never there." How does that make you feel? If anything, you're putting money into other people's pocket. Allow yourself the chance to think, if not for yourself at least for your baby!

Court

Yup, I had court on the eighth of February and me, and my crime partner admitted to the crime. They going to send him to the ranch, and I might go to Glen Mills because my lawyer is sayin' that shhh. I hope I don't go because if I do, I got to stay there for three years.

-Young Kut U3

From The Beat: We think it's the unknown you're worried about. If you can use those three years that Glen Mills might require like a school, to learn what you can, then you can make your future better than your past. Even if, like good medicine, it tastes bad in the short run, it might be "just what the doctor ordered" in the long run.

Money Is More Valuable

To me, money is more valuable, because I don't know when my time is going to be up on this earth, so I need to get all the money I can before my time is up.

-Chantel U5

From The Beat: But what if, by getting all the money you can, you make your time on earth much shorter? Then is it worth it? When your time is up, what do you think will be more valuable, time or money?

If My Life Were A Soundtrack...

If my life were a soundtrack, my theme song would be, "I gotta make it to heaven for going through hell" by 50 Cent. This would be my theme song because I feel like for being only 16, I went through a lot. Probably not as much as the next man, but I been through and seen so much for being 16. In and outta juvenile and group homes, being shot and shot at, not knowing if I'm going to live or not.

A lot of pain is what my family, especially my mother, goes through, but I try to change my ways. I just don't be as determined to changing as I do to hanging. So this is the reason why I chose this to be my theme song, because I know I'm gonna make it to heaven after going through hell.

-Stu-B U2

From The Beat: From what you've written, your theme song may be fitting. What keeps you going through all of this? How can you avoid going through some of the things you've gone through? Why are you not "as determined to change as you are to hanging?" Do you think you've seen and been through too much to change? Wouldn't this motivate you even more to change? What would make you more "determined?"

Solid

This is to The Beat, what "solid" means 'cause y'all always criticize the solid every time someone writes it.

To me solid means to stay true to what you do no matter what it is. It can be a pimp, hoe, hustla, snitch, do the right thing or even a Christian. Solid is what I see myself as 'cause I feel that I love my ninjas and wife enough to stay true and to die for.

I also feel is that if you can't stay solid how can you respect yourself. I'm gone stray safe and solid.

-Too Militant U3

From the Beat: Okay, you won us over with "solid" reason. Our problem with the word is not about how you use it, but how some can abuse it to stand for turf. Do you find it interesting that in your list of examples to stay "solid" for, you did not include family, student, teacher or a lot of other people we wish you saw as models instead of the ones you listed?

Time Is More Important

I think that time is more important because you could always keep money, but you can never keep time.

-Ivan U2

From The Beat: Sounds true enough. So how much time are you missing out now? Does this thought/realization make you think any different about the choices you've made? Or the choices you will make? Do you think you might have done more with the time you had in the Beat workshop to write more than one sentence?

Wrong Footsteps

I would tell someone that juvenile is no joke. You put yourself in this position. If I were you I would be trying to do the right thing, take care of your mother or whoever I live with.

Me, I been to juvenile five times and it's nothing nice. The beefing stuff is stupid. It's ova some words and stuff. Don't follow the same steps that I went through. I have been shot at a lot of times and I have lost a lot of friends in this shhh.

-Young David U3

From the Beat: Are you telling yourself the same things you'd tell other people? If you've been shot at, and lost friends, and been locked up five times, what will it take for you to stop doing the things that will always lead to this consequence?

Be My Valentine

What good wit' The Beat? I was wishing I could be out for Valentines, but instead I'm in here with my brother. But I'm gon make it through. I'm gon be out soon and everything gone be ok. Even though I got a girl on the side, I'm gon make something happen, best ta believe I am. And I'm out like I say, "I'm done talking"

-The Guy U3

From the Beat: We're glad you're getting out, but is this going to a the last time we see you in here? We hope so.

How Would You Tell Someone Who Doesn't Know

What's up, Beat? This ya boi, Twon, coming from that nice unit 3 status. Well I'm about to put you up on game about this topic.

Like one time ya boi was at the school house, and my fellow classmates and the teacher was asking how it feels to be in the halls and on probation. I told them that it's stressful, and that you could get depressed a whole lot. But for certain people they think the halls is fun and games. That's why they keep coming back.

That all I told them. So I'ma leave it at that and I'ma hit y'all back later.

-Twon U3

From the Beat: Do you mean that you were one of those people you described as "they keep coming back"? You knew it was stressful; you knew you could get depressed a whole lot. But you came back! So tell us, what would be the most important help you could get when you're on the outs to keep you there?

How Would You Tell Someone Who Doesn't Know

I would tell my little brother go to school and do what you have to stay off the street. But if he doesn't understand, then he is gonna learn the way I did. Going to YGC or group home. I tell him how it feel in here without seeing his family.

-Lil' Spooky U3

From The Beat: We hope your little brother doesn't have to learn the hard way. The best teacher will be your own actions when you're back together. It won't matter what you tell him if he sees you doing things you wouldn't want him to do.

How Would You Tell Someone Who Doesn't Know?

I would let my mom know what I been through, and let her know what I done and seen. But I don't because I don't know how she will take it and if she will get mad, or sad. And I would not tell her, but, so I don't. I would take a chance. Well, we won't know that till next time.

-Michael U2

From The Beat: The things we hold in have a way of keeping us down. Letting it be known is kind of like opening up a door to let some fresh air in. Your mom may be able to help, or support you, with what you've been going through. In fact, we bet that she's been through some stuff that she has the same fear of sharing with you that you have of sharing with her. But as you said, you'll never know until you share that with her. We hope you're able to!

My Thoughts On Three Topics

When I was like 11, my mom wanted me to go somewhere with some of my family. But I didn't want to go really, and I didn't say anything. But it wasn't so bad when I got there.

I would tell like my lil' cousins and like my ninjas' lil' brothers how it is in here. That they don't want to come to the halls because it's not that many things you can do in here. And that they won't like it in here.

I think it's a matter of deeds and I think it's more important to show your love instead of say I love you. 'Cause anyone can say they love someone. It depends on how you show your love.

-Young I U2

From The Beat: Before we comment on any of what you wrote, we want to explain that The Beat wants you to choose just one topic to write about so that we can really get a good sense of what you think and how you express it. When you choose all three topics to address, as you did, it's hard to give us more than a couple of sentences on any of them. As to what you wrote, expectations have a way of affecting us all. But sometimes things aren't what we expect them to be. Do you plan on sharing your experiences with those young men, because we're pretty sure they may be curious enough to know, but may not want to ask. We agree that it's better to show then say some things. It seems to mean more with action than words behind it — and that includes promises to change as well as promises of love.

If My Life Was A Soundtrack

If my life was a soundtrack, my theme song would be Mac Dre's song, "Grown Shhh." One reason why I picked this song is because the lyrics go hard. That's one of my favorite songs that I like to gig to, and I don't really get sick of it.

Another reason why I would pick this song is because every time I really listen to what he say, I just think about the real stuff he say. That relate to what I've been through and seen because of where I'm from. One of his lines was, "You don't want to see me, punk get your hat flatted." If you don't know what that mean, well, it means that if you mess with me, you will get your head blew clean off.

-Slick U2

From The Beat: So that's how you feel and that's what you relate to? We can understand not wanting to be messed with and sticking up for your self, but is this the only way you would defend yourself? Are there other ways? We ask because you're right when you say "the lyrics go hard." But with hard action comes hard consequences. As you're experiencing some pretty minor consequences now, have you thought of those harder ones? Would it be worth it then?

Locked Up

As I enter this horrible place I feel depressed blazing through my mind. I feel so bad that I feel like going crazy on people. This place making me feel worse and worse every day. But that's what happens when I take advantage of my freedom.

My room smells like straight-up piss. I got to use the bathroom in front of another person. My roommate keeps getting switched. I keep getting moved around like a dog, and the staff treat you like a dogs.

This place here make me think about what I have on the outs. I'm sorry I can't write no more. I feel too stressed writing 'bout this stuff.

-Bin Laden U3

From The Beat: Sometimes, you just have to be strong, especially when you feel like caving. You have to hold on because you will get out. You will get a chance to show how much you now value freedom. Don't blow that chance before it gets here!

A Chance To Speak, But You Can't

When I am in court I be having a chance to speak, but I don't say anything to nobody in the courtroom. At the same time, I can't always hold it in. So when I go to court and they say, "Do you have anything to say," I am gone speak my mind and say what I got to say.

And when my family asks me the same thing, I sit there and say, "No." Then I just let it be on my chest. Then I say what I got to say. Then it feels all better.

It goes the same way in school. When the teacher asks the same thing, "I say no." Then I say what I got to say in the classroom, and in school.

-Young Jt U2

From The Beat: Sounds like you know that to say what you have to say can be better than holding it in. Sometimes we just have to be careful about what we say, especially if it's degrading or disrespectful. But it's definitely good to speak our mind, and ask questions if we don't understand.

"Money On Ma Mind"

My theme song would be Lil Wayne's, "Money On Ma Mind" because really that's all I think of. I already got it by any means, money, youngin. But I'm tired of hustling and pullin' licks. Like he said, "fast money don't last too long, you gotta pace it."

Man, people think I'm stupid 'cause I don't never spend my money I got from hustling. But let it be what it is 'cause I'm finna be doin' it the legal way. So the police can kiss my butt 'cause I'm really finna change. I'm going to Job Corps and when I turn 20, me and my squad going down south. I'm out.

-Grimey U2

From The Beat: Money motivates just about everyone, but some in different ways. The line you share sounds like the saying, "easy come, easy go." It's wise to have made the decision to get out of the lifestyle you've lived, because you never know what's around the corner. Hopefully, you will make your plans happen! Just stick to your game plan and not fall back, by letting it motivate you the wrong way.

Be My Valentine

If I had a chance to get out of juvenile on Valentines Day, that would go. I'll be with a female all day and all night. Because I'm a fly young D-Boy and I stay with a fly female ASAP.

-D-Boy U2

From The Beat: We understand why you're thinking about females since that's what Valentine's Day is supposedly about. But what else would you do with this time/day? Don't family and/or loved ones come to mind? What's so fly about you that keeps these "fly females" attracted to you? And why put yourself in a setting with only other males if this is the case? Does this even matter to you? We're just asking.

Valentines Day

Valentines Day, man that mess up 'cause I can't be outside and be with my valentine. Yeah, I hope she gets out the same time I do for real 'cause I want to spend my valentines day with her! But I'ma be in here for a minute, so she probably ain't going to wait for me.

-Js U3

From The Beat: Maybe she figures you didn't wait for her when you did whatever it was that led the system take you away. Or maybe just not knowing about the future is too hard for her. It would make us want to stay out of places like this for real.

My Theme Song

I would choose "Living In The Projects," by Lil' Scrappy for motivation. That would motivate me by reminding me of what my childhood and many others. It would tell me to go out and do something or get a job. So that I or my children, nieces, and nephews won't have to live like that anymore.

-Deezy U2

From The Beat: Since all of what you mentioned is what "motivates" you about that song, has it "motivated" you to take action? Thoughts and feelings are a good start, but without action nothing really changes. You've had the time to think about all of this, so now what are you going "to do" about what you've realized? As they say, "action speaks louder than words."

The Trek

The Sioux had to move from Texas.
While walking through the rain,
they wore strings of pearls
that lit up like fireballs.
Soon, they reached
a mountain, full of snow.

-Bruce

From The Beat: Bruce, you're just getting started. This is fine writing. We want to know what happens next.

Always Money, Maybe Not

I would pick money over time, because in my world, nothing is free. You need money to buy stuff to live - like food, or clothes to wear. You can't get anything with time. To live a good life, you need money. (The truth is - you need both of them.)

-Arturo

From The Beat: You wrote yourself right into that one. Good job.

... all is well with me
and I'm just posted up,
standing tall with my
back against the wall.

Poem For Mija

Days go by really slow.
Months go by even slower.
Thinking about you
makes my days go by....

-My Days

From The Beat: We're betting they go by faster when you're thinking of someone you love.

Forget Change

I would not change my life because I don't want to. My life is good right now. So I won't have to come here any more. I don't like this place. It's boring in here. I'd rather be kicking it with my homeboys.

-No change here

From The Beat: If your life is good now, why do you find yourself in the hall? But here's a tip about beating the "bores". Pick up a good book. Start reading it and you won't want it to end. Toward the tail end of the tale, you'll actually want time to slow down a bit. Try it.

Where Am I Headed?

The judge wants me to get out of here - either to a group home, or to live with my aunt in South Central LA. I did not commit a big ass crime. And I haven't been in the hall for a long time. So I think it's kind of messed up. But the judge is kind of right, in a way. But I still think he should change his mind.

-Waiting

From The Beat: We hope you get to a place where you can learn new behavior and become the kind of person you want to be. Living with your aunt doesn't sound like a bad option, to us.

Mario, The Most Unforgettable Character

The most unforgettable character I've ever met was a dude named Mario. He was weird. He was a gang member and he tried to teach me everything he knew about gangs. He wasn't really weird. He was cool. But there was something awkward about him. He stayed up all night long. I remember, I would go home and he would show up, all late. Other than that, he was all right.

-George

From The Beat: We hope you weren't a good student. But here you are, so maybe you were.

I'm Leaving

Well, what's up Beat?

I thought I was leaving, but I'm still here for a couple of weeks. I'm gonna be going to the "Y". I'll be going to Preston for my evaluation, and I might stay there, or go somewhere else. I want to leave already, 'cause this place sucks. I got to do seven years, but I probably won't have to do all of that. So we'll see what's up.

I might even shoot you guys a letter from up there. We'll see. I'm out.

-Indio

From The Beat: Please do shoot us a letter, or five, or ten, or more. Send it to The Beat Without. You've got the address. Do some serious reading while you're in there. Think about doing some college courses. Best!

It Sucks

Being locked up sucks. Sleeping on nothing but a mattress with stiffing - your back hurts, and you wake up early and you get no sleep. You eat garbage, and it sucks, and every day is the same shhh. But it can be cool, too, like when your homies come in and chop it up.

-J

From The Beat: Hey, we hear that the food isn't all that bad at Santa Cruz juvy. You must have very refined tastes.

My Life

I would keep my life the way it is, but without getting in trouble. I like doing what I do, but I don't like getting arrested and being locked up. I just want to change the getting in trouble part.

-Troubleless

From The Beat: OK, that's the kind of change we're wishing for you.

Last Time

This is the last time I will come to juvenile hall. I will leave soon. I will do better at home. I will not get in trouble anymore because I don't want to be here. I don't like it here.

-See ya all

From The Beat: We want you to be right. What's your plan? Why will you do better at home, now?

I Would Rather Change

I would rather change and I would start by changing the way I think. One reason I would want to change the way I think is that most of the things I think are negative. For example - sometimes I think about breaking the law - 24/7.

-Felipe

From The Beat: Felipe, try this: everyday, for the next month, start the day by thinking of three kind things you can do for other people. It might be something you can do for a neighbor, or your mom, or maybe even a stranger. We guarantee you this. If you do three nice things, everyday, for a month, it will change your life, for the better.

Time

I would rather have time over money, 'cause money can't buy time. Time is life, and life - well, there's nothing compared to life.

-Nick

From The Beat: Write on!

Handling My Biz

What's up Beat? This is 'Lil Huero, coming at you.

Well Beat, I've been locked up for one year now, and it's not looking too good for me. But I just handle my biz like a G, and always conduct myself with a positive attitude. And I always have a strong mind.

Well, I really don't know what to talk about this week, because the topics don't interest me. But just know that all is well with me and I'm just posted up, standing tall with my back against the wall.

Until paper meets pencil, I'll be here. Alrato.

-Jesse

From The Beat: Jesse, we keep waiting for another series. What will it be next time? We bet you could write a six part series on just one hour of your life. You are a very careful observer. We're being patient.

Choice

Well, if I had a choice to change my life or stay the same, I would stay the same. Why? Because I've done a lot of stuff. Some I regret. Some I'm proud of. But if I changed myself, I wouldn't be me. Even though I'm locked up for being me, it's all good. I may be locked up physically, but they can't lock me up mentally.

-I Have A Choice

From The Beat: That's not the kind of change we mean. We're talking about changing the way you behave, not implanting a different brain in your skull. You can change, and still be you. You can never not be 'you'. But you can be a better you. If you really want to.



Hawaii, Without Gangs And Trouble

I want to go to Hawaii because I want to get away from all the gangs and all the trouble. My other reason I want to go to Hawaii is because it's a good place to leave.

-Luis

From The Beat: Hawaii has wonderful things to offer. You can swim, snorkel and see blue star fish and yellow, black and white striped angel fish through your mask, that swim right along with you in the shallows of the Pacific. You can deep sea dive, visit the volcano, explore the jungles. We hope you make it, but also remember it has its share of problems too. Make better choices, regardless!

You Never Know When You Gona Die

The places I'm going to—I'm going soon, very soon, because you never know when you gona die and I wanna see half of the world before I die. I wanna go to Mexico, Africa, Jamaica, Italy, Brazil and Paris and more... I want to go to all these places to get away from a lot of things.

-D Money

From The Beat: What is it about the places you named that intrigue you, D Money? Make it happen! Nobody is holding you back. You can do it if you really put your mind into it. Good luck over there, maybe you can write a book about your experiences about those countries and their culture.

I'd Like to Party in Cancún And Meet My Cousins In Canada

If I could go anywhere else in the world, it would be in Cancún, so I could see all the fine ladies and meet them, and just party all over there and come back, tryna be hard.

I would also like to visit Canada, so I could meet up with some people and see two of my cousins I've never seen.

-Christian

From The Beat: You can also swim in Cancun, learn Spanish, eat some fabulous food, see how people dance, play music, paint murals, make pottery, etc., in Mexico. We heard it's expensive there. So start saving money. We also hope you get a chance to enjoy your cousins in Canada. Best of luck!

I Wonder What My Girl Is Thinking

Man, there are a lot of things in my mind, but writing things down, it feels way better. Like I'm locked up for a VOP, but I'm going to be out in two weeks. I wonder w'at my girl is thinking. I barely got locked up like two hours ago. She's going to be mad, but when I get out, I'll make it up. I love her so much.

-Payaso

From The Beat: It sounds like your girlfriend may not even know yet that you've been arrested and taken to juvy. If you love her why were you willing to risk your freedom and your relationship with her for something not worth it? Two weeks from now, when you're on the outs, can you stay cool and free? We hope so.

Struggles

I wish I could hold my dreams on tight
Instead of thinking about me and moms having a fight
I wish I could go to school happy, not mad
The music talent inside me fading away in a dash
I remember a CPS lady came to interview me
She made me hella mad
So I said, "get away from me, you stupid beezy"
I wish that I could go back to Richmond
An' get away from my struggle
Or pop it like a bubble
Get away from serious trouble
I wish I could get away from the ninja who hate
On the young ninja--blowin' up, talkin' 'bout me
Talkin' 'bout I'm weak and I'm negative hyphy
But all of that I got to leave behind
But I'm lost in the dark with struggle I can't hide

-Jayleon

From The Beat: We're sorry for the life you've been living this whole time. We would be complaining if we were living in such a crazy environment. Things could be different if you put an effort to it. If we were on your shoes, we would do whatever was possible to get away from this life. Do you know if any of your family relative can help you of this mess? There are places and programs that can offer you a better living situation than the one you're living. As for right now, focus in getting out, doing the right thing, getting your education and looking for a job to safe money and be able to move away from this place. It could happen. Nothing is impossible in this life.

Y'all Know Who I Am

I ain't gots to put my name for y'all to know who
I ain't no sucka or a punk, and I ain't no cop
I might get on you; shhh happens
But y'all ain't tryin' do nothing; yo' mouths just keep flappin'
I'm the finest in the city
I'm locked up for a minute, but I'll be back at it right quick
This halls is booky and you ain't gon' see me back soon
Fresh out, right back, hustle all night straight under the moon
I stay up, I'm all night, like Denny's
I'm countin' pow wow, while you scappin' for pennies
I don't trip off the lil' shhh, straight up OG
Hard hitter, none y'all could touch me
And you best not test me
I'll lay a sucka out; it ain't nothin' to me
And if I told you once, don't make me tell you twice
Baby Face ain't nothin' nice

-Baby Face

From The Beat: We're not going to see you back, "SOON." What does that mean? This tells us that you are coming back not now but later. What you predict is what you get. So be careful what you wish for. But with your attitude it seems like you intend to head right back to the streets to get rich, whatever. If you do, why wouldn't you expect to get arrested and sent right back to juvy? Come one, wake up. Your time to play the childish game is over. It is time to grow up and start acting like a grown adolescent?

Outta Here

Yea, this yo' boy, J Baby, gonna be outta here to the groupie, yaddidimean? It's about time—a ninja been locked down for like about two months, and a few weeks straight. But it's nothin', though, so I'm gonna head up state, so it's whatever. You know me, gone.

Stay up to all locked up in the halls or in groupies.

-J

From The Beat: We only got only one suggestion: do your program, participate in your program, follow the rules of the program and finish your program without getting in trouble. Is that hard to do? It will be for you if you don't straighten up and fly right!

Keep Your Heads Up, Men

I just wanna say keep your heads up, men, because I got caught with thizz and this is my eighth time in here.

-Nor

From The Beat: And how many more time are you going to be in here? The way you are going, you're asking for further problems.

Gettin' Out

What's up with it? Well, a for me, I'm happy because I get out on the soon to go to placement and I only gotta do six months. I'll be eighteen this year and you know' it's goin' be a wrap. Anyways, I got somethin' to say. I'll see you when I see you.

-Purpicious

From The Beat: Good news! What are your plans? Do you plan on finishing the program? What's after this program?

You Lookin' At Me

-Baby Face

From The Beat: Sorry Babe Face, we we're not able to publish your piece, because it was more like a personal message. These types of writing are not allowed in The Beat.



Time Or Money

I up in Walden House going dummy
I would rather get money
I got too much time

To be wastin' because of some petty-ass crime
Like Mac Dre say: "Life's a witch, and then you die"
I never realized until I start seeing anger in my eyes
It's a trip I'm going through this shhh
But I'm still the top-notch female
Yeah, I put out a few hits so girls, there go yo' tip
Before I do, y'all better catch a grip
I'm known to do some shaded shhh
But dat's not me, but, beezies, you still betta respect
'Cause if not it's yo' chin I'm go' check!
So stop wastin' time, make up ya mind
And get on the grind....

-Lil' K

From The Beat: There's a lot about wasting time here, but all we can see is that you are wasting major time. This is an opportunity handed to you to check yourself, but instead, all you can talk about is "them" — the females you threaten in this piece which teaches us nothing about you, about them, about your situation, or about what you plan to do to avoid being the slave you've allowed yourself to be. Are we impressed by your threats? Oh yeah, as if we haven't read them a thousand times before! All we can say is, unless you have the courage to focus on yourself (and there's little evidence of any courage here), you won't be able to move forward. Forget about "them" and start focusing on you! Oh yes, and one more thing. There are no women in The Beat that we allow to be called by the hateful word you chose to call them. Even Mac Dre's quote is only allowed because it is a quote. We won't allow it again!

In Rehab

So after being in Santa Cruz County Juvenile Hall for a while, they straight sent me to intensive rehab in San Francisco. Crazy place. SF is different than SC. Well, I got to stay here for six months or more!

I usually always run from where they put me, but I don't know these San Francisco streets, so I don't know what I'ma do. If I run, I gotta go to YA, the Ranch, etc., so I just hope I make the right choice. I'm so used to being on the run, and this place is so structured, so many rules. I know it's for my own good, but I keep leaning towards a bad decision. Why I gotta love da streets?

-Shottie

From The Beat: When you say you "usually run," we have to ask: Is what you have "usually" done working for you? We hope you can answer this question honestly, because it's time for you to take a close look at where your life is right now, and how it got there. If you do that, you'll be that much better prepared to avoid the pitfalls that have led you to have to run from placements because it will also help you avoid being sent to those placements in the first place. We hope you take some real time to think about the next steps after that first burst of freedom (if you run). It doesn't end there, as your rational mind will tell you. Sometimes, being an adult means putting up with things we don't like now, so that we can get things we do like later. Children find this very hard to do since they are grounded only in the present. We hope you're beyond this stage of childhood, but your actions will answer that question much better than your words.

This Is Why

You love because it's a part of life
You love because it's right
You love, you love, you love
Just to win the fight
You fight for love
You fight to keep it alive
You fight to keep and make everything right
Pray to God and you will get through
Believe it or not
The choice is all up to you

-LaRonda

From The Beat: Well, when we responded to the poem above, we didn't know that you had attempted to answer your own question. Your answer is a little different from ours, but we also agree with yours.

Flows From My Heart

Being famous for doing me
Flows from my heart
Words you can't see, come close
And you'll get a chill for frontline fame
I'ma make you feel
I read the haters from the bottom to top
Each step I take, I make a shot
Go forward now, ain't stepping back
Step close to me and I might snap my focus
Here is me, for real, that's what I am

-Purple Hayze

From The Beat: Again, while we admire the poem, we wish for more information to make its meaning clearer to us. What does reading the haters do for you? How do you respond to them? What does "doing you" mean to you, and is it the kind of famous that helps or hurts you? Is the line that begins, "Step close to me..." a threat? If so, what are you threatening? It seems to us that you are here because you have issues you need to work on. If you don't agree with that, you should write about why you don't. If you do agree, you should write about what those issues are that are holding you back. We want poetry that reveals more than yours does.

As Long As I Ain't Runnin'

Time or money on my hands
Time or money... I can't get a brand new pair of pants
Do ya think I have time wit' all this shhh on my mind?

Do ya think I will have a chance?
Well, maybe so, as long as I ain't runnin'
Tryin' to get money
Well, that about all I could say today
Good-bye, Da Beat, and have a nice day

-Ya Lil' Shorty

From The Beat: We think that as long as you're not running, things can only get better. And we're not just talking about running from a program, but using chemicals (including alcohol) to run from problems. Facing them is the beginning of a long journey that can only begin by taking these first few steps, and then continuing step-by-step. We don't "think" you will have a chance, we KNOW you have that chance, and that it's in your hands.

Happy Valentine

I had a love in my life, but I had so many choices, but I didn't take it. I took the long road, where everything is bad, and I can't do nothing. We always fighting and some more, but look where that got me! I went through all that to get here, so now I'm going to have to have a friend, before I get into that again.

-Peaches And Cream

From The Beat: We need some more explanation than what you've provided in this short piece. What does it mean that you "took the long road?" What are the choices you didn't take, and what are the choices you plan to take now that you're getting a clearer picture of your life? Tell us what your future holds, and how you're going to get there from here.

I Want Change, But...

I want to change my life, but I don't want to take six months to do it. I need to change because I can't be a crazy tweker on the streets forever. I want to do good, yet my feet itch and I need to scratch, yadida?

Well, to all incarcerated, keep yo' heads up, do your program, get done, go home. I should listen to myself, but I don't. Ha! Well, drugs are bad for you! Stay clean.

-Shottie

From The Beat: You're right, you should listen to yourself. In fact, why should anyone take your advice if you can't take it yourself? Even if you have itchy feet, that doesn't mean you have to run. Running is another child's way out of unpleasant situations, as if the situations won't be there when you stop running. Responsibility means facing our problems and recognizing that we have to take control of our choices. Running is just another way to give control to others.

The One

I thought that you were the one
The one who gave me my true love
I should've known from the first day
You were never my one
It was so good at first
But then you ended up treating me like dirt
You were best at keeping secrets, like Kate
I should've known right then that you were not the right one
When we were together we were like '07 Bonnie and Clyde
We would do it all and then run and hide
She came back and then you bounced
I knew I should've never run back
Not only once, but twice
I should've known you were never my one
They used to call us Beauty and the Beast
I used to think it was just a joke
Now I know it's true
The Beast destroyed the Beauty

-Malibu Beach Barbie

From The Beat: We're sorry you had your heart broken, MBB, but you know, it's all part of growing up, something that we've all experienced, so we feel your pain. At the same time, to be a good Beat piece, we need to learn more than that he did you wrong. Besides what this tells you about him, have you learned any bigger lessons that others might be able to apply in their lives? If you did things like Bonnie and Clyde and then ran to hide, do you feel that karma may be playing a role in this? For sure, forgetting him for a minute, we hope you focus on your own stuff, so that you can leave this program stronger than when you entered it.7

Free At Last

This program makes me mad
Sometimes I'm angry, depressed, or even sad
I miss what I had
I wanna be free at last
I wish I could go back an' change ma past
And not have moved so fast
But now I see I gotta work on me
So in March I will be free
And when I do
I gotta work on me and not you
But when I get it right I will help ma boo
So we can make it together
We can go through rain, storms, thunder
Any kinda weather, and that's whenever
I jus' want us to be right
I wish, in the beginning, we had seen the light, but that's all right.
We all make mistakes
Now it's our duties to soldier up and clean our plates before it's too late
And when we're done, like Tony the Tiger would say
"That's Great!"
Now, all I gotta remember is life don't have to be a war
'Cause I'm smart enough to get down on ma knees and pray to the Lord.

-LaDonna

From The Beat: Are you learning any new skills in here that will help you make your life something other than a war? Do you feel better able to deal with the temptations and reality of living in freedom than you did when you walked into Walden House? What are some of those skills you will rely on to keep yourself strong, sober and free when you get out? When you pray to the Lord, what exactly are you praying for? Of course, part of the prayer is just to get free, but after that, what is the help you're hoping for?

I just hope I make
the right choice

La Oportunidad Que Desperdicie

Cuando me dijeron, "te vamos a dar una oportunidad," me senti muy feliz. Cuando me dijeron que si me volvian a agarrar, me iban a deportar, yo me senti muy triste. Sabia que allá volveria a lo mismo, pero no fue así. Me dieron otra oportunidad, pero ahora sé que no hay otra oportunidad.

From The Beat: Desafortunadamente no podistes apreciar esa oportunidad que te otorgaron. A veces uno nunca sabe lo que tiene hasta que se la quitan y eso fue exactamente lo que te pasó a ti. ¿Crees que hayas aprendido algo despues de esta experiencia? ¿Si si, que fue lo que aprendistes? Esperamos que desde ahora en adelante aprendas a apreciar lo que la vida te ofrece.

The Opportunity I Wasted

When they told me, "We are going to give you another chance," I felt happy. When they told me that if they catch me again, they were going to deport me back to my country, I felt sad. I knew, if I had gotten sent, things would be the same over there. They gave me another opportunity, but now I know that there won't be another one.

-Hernandez U6

From The Beat: Unfortunately you couldn't appreciate this opportunity that was given to you. Sometimes we don't know what we have until it's taken away from us, and that's what happened to you. Do you think you learned something after this experience? If so, what did you learn? We hope you learn to appreciate what you have and what life is offering you. If they give you another chance, take advantage of it.

Me Avisaron

A mí la policia si me ha dado algunas oportunidades. Algunas veces me pudieron arrestar, pero me han dicho, "vete a tu casa y si te volvemos a ver, te arrestaremos." Me senti la persona más estúpida. Si no hubiera llegado el aviso a mí, yo hubiera dicho que no me avisaron, pero lo hicieron y no hay excusas. Las oportunidades que me dieron no me sirvieron de nada porque volvi a hacer las mismas cosas.

From The Beat: ¿Que hay que hacer ahora? Te dieron la oportunidad que necesitabas para mantenerte afuera de problemas y lo tirastes a la basura. Esperamos que puedas aprender de esta experiencia. ¿Crees que aprendas? ¿Si te dieran otra oportunidad para que hicieras las cosas bien, lo harias?

They Warned Me

Police have given me a few chances. Sometimes, they could have arrested me. Instead, they said, "Go home and if we see you again, we're taking you in." I felt like a stupid person. If I hadn't gotten the news, I would say that I wasn't warned, but they did warn me and there is no excuse. The chances I got were not useful because I went back to do the same things.

-Denis U2

From The Beat: What are you going to do now? They gave you the chances you needed to stay out of trouble and you blew it. We hope you learn from this experience. Will you learn something from this? What? If they gave you another chance, would you take advantage of it to do things right? Sure?

Dando Una Chanza

Muchos policas me dieron una chanza, pero yo no quise hacerles caso. Me decian que la próxima vez me iban a llevar preso. Como yo no sabia lo que era estar preso.

Ahora comprendo lo que es estar encerrado en este lugar y nunca lo volvere a pisar jamás en mi vida.

From The Beat: ¿Cambiará tu forma de ser o de pensar despues de esta experiencia? Esperamos que de verdad nunca más vuelvas a este lugar. Cuidate y aprende de tu experiencia. Si sales, alejate de lugares y gentes que te puedan meter en más problemas.

Given Another Chance

A lot of police officers gave me a chance, but I didn't take it seriously. They would tell me that for the next time, they were going to take me in.

Now I know how it is to be locked up in a place like this one and I'll never in my life step a foot into a place like this one.

-Donadi U6

From The Beat: Will this experience change the way you think things over? We hope you never come back to this place. Take care, and hopefully you learn from this experience. If you get out, try to stay away from places and people that can get you into trouble.

Mis Pensamientos

Mi familia tiene mucho significado porque es lo más importante que uno tiene en la vida. La principal de la familia es la madre la que nunca se olvida de uno y te recuerda siempre. Ella es alguien que te da motivo para enfrentar las cosas buena y mala de la vida.

Me gustaria ir a España porque es algo que quisiera hacer en mi vida. Me gustaria ir a la ciudad de Barcelona. Me gustaria ir porque me gustaria conocerla.

Mi sueño es ver jugar al equipo de Barcelona y poder ver los mejores jugadores del mundo.

From The Beat: Es verdad, las madres son lo más importante en la vida. Desafortunadamente no le pudistes hacer caso a lo que ella te quiso decir. ¿Crees que despues de esta experiencias tu le puedas hacer caso a tu madre? Bonito lugar que visitar. De ahí es donde surgió la lengua que tu hablas, tu apellido y muchas cosas más.

My Thoughts

My family has a lot of significance because they are the most important thing that one has in life. The principal figure in a family is the mother who never forgets about one and always remembers you. She is someone who gives you motivation to confront the good things and bad things in life.

I would like to go to Spain because it is something I would like to do in my life. I would like to go to the city of Barcelona. I would like to go there because I would like to get to know it.

My dream is to see the team from Barcelona play and be able to see the best players from the world.

-Alex U4

From The Beat: It's true; mothers are the most important things in life. Unfortunately, you were not able to obey what she was trying to tell you. Do you believe that after this experience you can obey your mother? What a nice place to go visit. From the place you want to go visit, the tongue that you speak was derived, your last name, and many other things.

I want to advise you to behave well when it's necessary. You have to live life now, because we never know what to expect for the day of tomorrow.

Por Que Estoy Aqui

Aqui estoy en el Rancho escribiendo para el Beat. Hace como unas semanas, me agarre a putasos con otro residente de aqui. Hoy es viernes y me acaban de mover de cama, pero me vale verga.

Les voy a contar la historia del porque estoy aqui. Fue el 6 de Junio cuando iba caminando. Mire a unos enemigos y les dije "what's up." Luego se me lanzaron encima. Me dieron patadas, madrasos y más patadas. Ese día yo habia comprado un pantalon y una camisa, y uno de los que me estaban pegando, agarró mi pantalon, lo hizo como un rollo y me empezo a pegar en la cabeza. Me defendi y cuando miraron sangre salieron corriendo.

Los segui con y me agarro la policia y por eso estoy aqui. Tengo dos intentos de homicidios y como 6 felonía por poliarne en B-5.

Les quiero decir que se porten bien cuando sea necesario. Hay que vivir la vida porque no sabemos si mañana la vamos a tener.

From The Beat: Si tienes razón que hay que vivir la vida porque nunca sabemos cuando se va a terminar. Pero estamos desacuerdo de la manera como la estas viviendo tú. Mirate en la situación horrible que te has metido por cosas que no valen la pena. Has lastimado a otras personas por un simple color. ¿Si lo hubieras matado, estaria bien tu conciencia? ¿Estaria en paz? Tienes que ponerle un stop a tu vida, a la vida loca que estas viviendo antes que termines en cárcel por el resto de tu vida. ¿Qué quieres probar con esa actitud? ¿Crees que ganaras algo bueno al defender algo que no sirve ni es tuyo? Nada tienes que probar. Esa no es la forma de vivir, busca una religión o cosas positivas que te hagan cambiar de pensar.

Why I'm Here

Here I am at the Ranch writing for The Beat. A few weeks ago, I got into a fight with another resident from here. Today is Friday and they've moved me from one bed to another, but I don't care.

I'm going to share the story of why I'm here. It was June 16th when I was walking. I saw a few enemies of mine and I said, "What's up." Later, they started to jump me. They kicked me, and hit me and kicked me more and more. That day, I had bought a pair of pants and a shirt, and one of them took it from me and hit me with it. He rolled them up and hit me on my head. I tried to defend myself. When they seen blood, they started to run. I followed them and the police arrested me. That's why I'm here. Now I have six felonies for fighting.

I want to advise you to behave well when it's necessary. You have to live life now, because we never know what to expect for the day of tomorrow.

-Amigo LCRS

From The Beat: You're right when you said that we have to live life now because we don't know when it will end. But, we disagree with the way you are living your life. Just take a look at your horrible situation you've gotten into for something that isn't worth it. You've hurt another person for a simple color. If you had killed this person, how would your conscience be at this moment? Would it be in peace? You have to make a stop to your life, the crazy life you are living before you end up in jail or in a worst place for the rest of your life. What are you trying to prove by such of behavior? Do you think you will earn something valuable that will benefit you in the future by defending something that it's not worth it or yours? You got nothing to prove. Look for a religion, or find new and positive things that can change the way you think.

Sólo Dios Puede

Se que el tiempo es importante pero también es importante el dinero. Sin el dinero no compraría a lo que quisieramos. El tiempo nos dejaría hacer lo que quisieramos en nuestras vidas.

Si me gustaría cambiar mi vida por completo porque no es facil vivir la Navidad como la que estoy pasando yo. Desearía cambiar mi vida, pero para cambiar mi vida tendria que buscar a Dios, porque El es el unico que puede hacerlo.

Les quiero dar un consejo: Si quieren cambiar tu vida, solo busquen a Dios porque Dios es todo poderoso. El puede cambiar tu vida.

From The Beat: ¿Que te esta deteniendo para buscar a Dios? ¿Si sabes que El es el único que te puede ayudar a ser diferente, porque no lo buscas? Tienes la solución en las manos, no deje que se te escape. Gracias por tu consejo y esperamos que la apliques a ti mismo.

Only God Can

I know that time is important, but money is also important. Without money, we wouldn't be able to buy what we want. Time would let us do what we would like to do in our lives.

Yes, I would like to change my life completely because it is not easy it is not easy to live Christmas the way I am living it. I would like to change my life, but to change my life, I would need to seek God because He is the only one who could do it.

I want to y'all some advice: If y'all want to change your lives, just seek God because God is almighty. He can change your life.

-Yorin U6

From The Beat: What is holding you back from seeking God? If you know that He is the only one who can help you become a different person, why don't you seek Him? You have the solution in your hands; don't let it escape you. Thank you for your words of advice and we hope that you also listen to your own words of advice.

Canada

Deseo ir a Canada porque me han dicho que es muy bonito. Yo deseo ir a conocerlo. Ese es mi sueño, conocerlo, pasear e ir a muchos lados.

Mi hermano estubo ahí y me conto como era y desde entonces se convirtió en una obsesión y muy pronto ire a conocerlo. Es mi sueño, primero Dios.

From The Beat: Esperamos y llegues a cumplir tu sueño. Nada es imposible en esta vida cuando se desea con alma y corazón.

Canada

I desire to go to Canada because I have been told that it is very nice. I long to go know it. That is my dream; get to know it, go walk up and down it, and go to many places.

My brother was there and he told me how it was, and ever since then, it converted to an obsession and pretty soon, I will go and get to know it. It is my dream, God willing.

-Donadi U6

From The Beat: We hope that you're able to fulfill your dream. Nothing is impossible in this life when one desires to accomplish something with one's soul and heart.

Lo Que Quiero Hacer

Que onda, homie? Pues, aquí estoy atravez escribiendo mis pensamientos. Pues lo que quiero hacer es ir a El Salvador. Pues me vine de El Salvador bien pequeño y ya no me acuerdo de mi país. Quisiera visitar a mi familia en especial mi abuelita. Casi toda mi familia esta allá.

Si pudiera mandarle un Beat a alguien, yo se lo mandaría al gobenador de California y le dijera que en vez de estar haciendo más cárceles debería de hacer más escuelas.

From The Beat: Bueno, cuando seas mayor de edad puedes ser que cumplas con ese deseo. Primero lo que tienes que hacer es alejarte del lugar donde te encuentras en estos momentos. Creemos que el gobernador de California, necesita saber lo que tu quieres decirle. ¿Por qué no le escribes esa carta?

What I Want To Do

What's up, homie? Well, here I am once again, writing my thoughts. Well, what I want to do is go to El Salvador. Well, I came from El Salvador very little and I no longer remember anything from my country. I would like to visit my family, in particular my grandma. Almost my entire family is over there.

If I could send a Beat to someone, I would send it to the governor of California and I would tell him that instead of building more jails, he should build more schools.

-Laey, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Well, when you're of age, you can be the one that fulfills this wish. The first thing that you need to do is distance yourself from the place where you find yourself at this moment. We believe that the governor of California needs to know what you're trying to tell him. Why don't you write him that letter?

En Los Estados Unidos

Bueno, mi nombre es Elvin. Soy Hondureño. Soy de la colonia Villa Franca y me gustaría ir a Honduras de vuelta con mi madre y mis hermanos que se encuentran allá.

En este país, EEUU, solo lo ando visitando por unos cuantos años, y aquí la vida no es tan fácil como uno la mira. La vida en este país es bien dura y además los gringos son basuras de pagarles menos a los Latinos en los trabajos.

Aquí me encuentran en esta cárcel, tengo dos meses y no se cuando voy a salir. Es por eso que pronto.

Gracias por venirmos a visitar y que Dios los bendiga siempre y que los acompañe en las buenas y en las malas.

From The Beat: "No hay que juzgar el libro por su pasta." ¿Has escuchado esta frase antes. Sabemos que en este país hay discriminaciones, pero no solo los blanco contra la raza morena o Latinos. También hay discriminaciones entre Latinos y tu lo sabes. Aquí te trataran por lo que eres. Si eres una persona que no tiene título de escuela, o una profesión, no vales mucho y tampoco te pagarán mucho. Pero si eres una persona preparada educacionalmente, vas a tener un buen trabajo y buen saldo. Todo esta en la educación. ¿Entonces, estas dispuesto a estudiar mucho? Sentimos muchos si has pasado por malas experiencias las cuales te han hecho hablar de esta manera.

In The United States

Well, my name is Elvin. I'm Honduran. I'm from a part of town called Villa Franca and I would like to go back to Honduras with my mother and my brothers who can be found over there.

In this country, USA, I'm just visiting it for a couple of years, and over here, life is not as easy as one views it to be. Life in this country is very hard and furthermore, white people are trash to pay Latinos less for their work.

Y'all find me here in this jail. I've been in here for two months and I don't know when I am going to get out. I hope that it's soon.

Thank you for coming to visit us and may God bless y'all always and may He accompany y'all during good times and bad times.

-Elvin U7

From The Beat: "One should not judge a free person for his pasture." Have you heard this phrase before? We know that in this country there are people who discriminate, but it's not white people against black people or Latinos. There's also discrimination between Latinos and you know this. In here, they will treat you for what you are. If you are a person who does not have a title from a school, or a profession, you're not worth much and nor will they pay you much. But if you are a person who is educationally prepared, you're going to have a good job and good health. It's all based on education. So, are you ready and willing to study a lot? We deeply regret if you have gone through bad experiences which have caused you to speak this way.

La Vida Que Llebo

Es más valoroso el tiempo que el dinero porque con el tiempo se hacen muchas cosas e incluso hasta ganar dinero.

Nunca ha pasado por mi mente cambiar mi vida porque no quisiera tener más de lo que yo soy. Tengo mi vida y me siento orgulloso de llevarla como la llebo.

From The Beat: ¿Crees que como llevas la vida es razón para sentirse orgulloso? ¿Qué hay de orgullo en eso?

The Life That I Lead

Time is more valuable than money because a lot of things are done with time, including even making money.

Never has changing my life crossed my mind I would not like to be anything less than what I am right now. I have my life and I feel proud to live it the way I live it.

-Alex U4

From The Beat: Do you believe that living the life that you lead is a good enough reason to feel proud of who you are? What's there to be proud of?

Mi Ruca

Tenía una ruca bien buena y con un cuerpasso, pero no la he vuelto a ver desde que vine de Mexico.

Era mi novia. Salía con ella todas las noches a caminar. Ella cahía a la carcel también porque robaba a los paisas, era una morra bien buena. Adiós nena.

From The Beat: ¿Una persona que robaba y lastimaba deces que es una persona buena? ¿Entonces si ella es bueno, es Bin Laden bueno?

My Girlfriend

I have a very good girlfriend and with a heavenly body, but I haven't seen her again since I came here from Mexico.

She was my girlfriend. I would go out with her every night for a walk. She, too, landed in jail because she robbed Latin immigrants. She was a very good girl. Goodbye, baby.

-Luisio, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You call someone who robbed and hurt others a good person? So if she is good, is Bin Laden good, too?

LEE SAMUEL CAPERS

From the darkest place in the gulag that is the California Prison system, from the place where you would expect to find utter hopelessness — Death Row — comes our longtime friend, Sammy Capers, reaching out a hand of hope and love to a Beat writer he does not know except through her words on paper, words of despair and suicidal thoughts. Read his beautiful and touching letter to the child that he calls "W" to understand the huge heart that beats in his chest and in The Beat — the pain he endured through childhood and multiple suicide attempts himself — and know that "W" could do no better than to take the hand that is extended to her here, and let the warmth that passes from that hand to our pages pass again into her heart and bring some comfort in a cold world. As if this heartfelt letter were not enough, Sammy also writes a series of poems that he has penned from his Death Row cell at San Quentin State Prison (and an introduction to them) reminding us all of what it means to be a Dead Man Walking...



I'm Just A Stranger

A stranger, in a strange world,
A world full of distant thought;
A strange mind, a strange step
Such a strange freedom that's forgot...

Strange actions, strange hands,
Just a stranger, lonely and lost;
Cast aside by strange intentions,
With a strange bill at life's cost...

A strange voice, of strange love,
Caught up in a strangers land;
Strange I say as it may be,
Much too strange to understand...

A strange girl with a stranger name,
Along with a love so strange;
Such emotions of desire and love
In which strangeness is to blame...

Who is she, this girl I yearn?
What has she done, for this fire to burn?
Is it a sin, to know what I've learned?
Such audacity at what's being churned?

A stranger, in strange world,
A world full of distant thought;
A strange mind, a strange step,
Such strange freedom that's forgot...

To her I'm just a stranger...

Search

I search for her
Where is she?
Away, she went far
Yet so close

Lips flavored of honeycomb
Perfection without a miss
Thoughts array of her magic

Voice she has amid
A million bird songs, melody
Unspoken, defined true love
Continuing to yearn, these arms

I search for her
Where is she?
Away she went far
Yet so close

Eyes of gentle doves
Stars and unseen dreams
The touch of virgin white
Recalled strawberry memories

Brings joy to this captive
In tokens of one, a torn heart
Missing her, loving her
Oh, yes, needing her

I search...

Pictures On The Wall

Some think I'm weird
As others find it odd to see
Whatever they may think
Makes no difference to me

See, they walk out each
Night, as we remain abroad
So it makes perfect sense
To talk to the pictures on my wall

It's mama, papa and sisters
And all my brothers and such
It's aunties cousins and uncles
The ones that mean so much

There's even one of a monkey
Along with a lizard I call Fred
With every day that passes by
There's so much more to be said

The pictures on my wall
Resemble bond and unity
Even though I'm on Death Row
They mean so much to me

There's times when I'm sad
My mamma will be right there
There's times when I'll be hella mad
Still my loving auntie, she will care

How about my uncle when
I get to tripping on small things
Then I spend time with my baby sisters
Oh, how much joy to me that brings

Papa is always there for me
With a lesson to be learned
Lastly there's my angelic girlfriend
When there's a prize to be earned

Well maybe I am a bit screwy
Maybe a lot more off
But please don't knock me, friends,
For talking to the pictures on my walls...

Dear W

What's going on? This is Sam Capers hittin' you with a few lines in response to your piece "A Day In My Shoes." And if you will allow me just a bit of your time, I would like to tell you about what I went through.

To begin, this hand that's writing this should have been dead years ago. Life to me was empty and lonely. One of the main reasons is because, I was the little fat boy everybody picked on and didn't want around. I was never accepted by the "populars" and grew up being mentally broke down due to my weight problem and trying to hard to fit in. Not only was I awkward but out of shape.

By my first year of Junior High School, I had already made the streets my domain. Along with a hard family life, and tough to break monkey on my back, my pain and lonely heart fell much deeper into despair. Not to mention that my weight was 249 pounds, and age was only thirteen years old. Slowly, the process of suicide was taking place. Slowly, I had promised myself the age of 22 would never see me.

Now let's talk about events that have made me the person I am today. For starters, my mom had several abusive husbands. There were times to where I was sexually and physically abused. The hardest of all was the mental abuse. Not to mention how my heart was broken time after time for asking a girl to a school dance and they did nothing but laugh in my face and talk bad about me to their friends. Everybody talks bad about me. Even to this day, folks hate on me. They don't even know me!

One day I snapped and did something that no human being with breath of life should do. That was to force people to accept me. The hand that writes this to you began to shed the blood of rivals and innocents all the same. I said to myself, "If these idiots won't allow me to be accepted at their own will, then there is a way to force them!" The biggest mistake made in my life. It went down hill from there.

My attitude, and every ounce of fat off of my body gone due to my drug addiction, made me somebody I'm totally not! People began to accept me and little by little my void began to go away.

Not long after, I met Blanca. We hooked up, got married and she was pregnant with my child. Our lives were beginning to straighten out, but it didn't happen soon enough. She was murdered in a gang related shooting. And it was all my fault. It was me who just had to go to the spot to get a sack of yeska. She was my life, my all. I was destroyed!

I walked away from my homies, everybody for that matter. It was a low point in my life that seemed to just get lower by the minute. Strung out on every kind of drug possible, I sat in a motel room in downtown Los Angeles called the Roselyn Motel. I was on the 4th floor overlooking the corner of Fifth and Main. It had been three months since we laid my wife to rest. Tears wouldn't come. Just hate, pain and loneliness. Picking up a .38, I put one bullet in the chamber and spun and fired that thing from 8:30 p.m. to 1:30 a.m. I remember the time was on the TV set. I blacked out. So now I'm dead. Good. No more pain and rejection.

Coming to at about noon the next day, I ran to the toilet to throw up. All it was blood. Food was not part of my diet. When it became obvious nothing else was gonna come up, the time came to clean up. Looking at myself in the mirror, I finally broke. I cried and cried, that's what I did. Big ol' gangsta me, and the person you mentioned who said it's ok to cry.

"It's Ok To Cry!"

For years the tears fell, as they do this very moment for you, hoping that you're doing fine. Just wishing that you

LEE SAMUEL CAPERS (CONT.)

can be free of all your pain, that I can take it away from you so you can enjoy life. See, my problem is, or it was rather, is that I took my pain out on others. That's why I'm on Death Row today. My pain, and get this...

W, I made five suicide attempts in my life. That last time was in 2003 when my grandma aka my mamma passed away. About that time the District Attorney's office hit me with this capital case I've been convicted on. It seemed my world turned upside down. The last time I almost died.

You say you're a tomboy with short hair and baggy clothes, no make-up and hangs with boys. You get pushed around and have twisted parents. You live in a world of strangers who don't give a shhh whether you are here today and gone tomorrow.

Well who says a young woman with short hair, baggy clothes, twisted family in a world full of strangers who don't give a shhh whether you're here today and gone tomorrow, ain't beautiful, smart and loving through and through? I know you're that one. That some lucky man will come along and see you for who you are and love you for it! How do I know? Because I've been in your shoes for the past 33 years of my life. I know I'm the bomb! And since we share the same shoes, Mija, then that makes you the bomb. With or without make-up, who cares?

Baby you say nobody cares or loves you. I do. Everybody at The Beat does. There's men here on the row who read your piece, your cry for help and wanted me to let you know they care. A lot of us have daughters, sisters and nieces your age. I have a fourteen-year-old daughter and a twelve-year-old baby sister. What I'm getting at is, suicide will not make things better.

I know the torture you face every second of the day. It's that struggle and fear of the unknown. The rejection, the feeling of wanting so bad to be accepted. Loved. Wanted. The feeling sucks, don't it? But there's ways to beat that without having to take your life. And that's accepting you for who you are. Easier said than done, right?

There is hope for you, Mija. And the only way to find that hope is to clear all the bad that's pulling you down in your mind, heart and soul and weed out the good. There's good in you. It's because you want to love somebody and be loved. Yet, you have yet to find out how to obtain it. A person who is bad can't love. And you have so much love to offer that it's killing you and bringing you down because you can't share it. Do not allow that to happen! With time, you will find what you desire. Here's s true proverb:

"Don't look for love, let love find you."... Don't look for acceptance, accept you for who you are.

Baby, don't do the suicide trip. The things you have going on in your life today will pass when you least expect it. Life is hella strange. One day we open our eyes to a new day and the world has changed. Ain't that something?

There's a big world out there for you with opportunities up the ying yang. With the grades you hold, man girl, you can be anybody you want to be and do anything you want to do. I have the faith in God as I understand him that you have the strength to see you through. I want to see you make it and so do others. Never doubt that you're cared for by me others here with me, and the staff at The Beat. They helped me in more than one way.

I understand you. Take my hand and let's walk in the shoes together.

The Choice

I choose to live,
To succeed
To love
To learn
To break free
To understand
To relax
To change
To be strong
To live!
Live!
Live!

Baby, don't do the suicide trip. The things you have going on in your life today will pass when you least expect it. Life is hella strange. One day we open our eyes to a new day and the world has changed. Ain't that something?

LEE SAMUEL CAPERS (CONT.)

Captivity

Doors, walls, lights
Cold, lonely, nights
Non, sense fights
"Captivity"

Nasty, cold, food
All, broken, rules
Mental, torture, tools
"Captivity"

Tears, of, hate
Can't, re, late
The, devil's, gate
"Captivity"

Strong, survives
Weak, must, die
Don't, ask, why
"Captivity"

Fear, rules, all
Must, stand, strong
Will, lose, if, fall
"Captivity"

Kidnapped, from, life
Torment, and, strife
Fight! Fight! Fight!
"Captivity"

People, be, aware
Backstabbers, everywhere
It's, in, the, air
"Captivity"

Must be free
Free, free, free
Chains break free of
"Captivity"

Sammy's Explanation

Let me explain to you about the poems that follow. First, "Search" is about a prisoner who is in search for that one lost love. He is lonely and blue. He sheds tears each night for his long lost love. The poem ends with the words "I search," to say that no matter what, he will continue to search for his love.

"Pictures On The Wall" is a poem about when a couple of weeks ago, the CO caught me talking to my family pictures. Though he made a bit of a joke of it, it's a personal way to keep myself from snappin'. It's also a fun thing because the pictures won't talk aback. If they did, the title in the mag would be, "Live From Atascadero State Hospital, Mr. Samuel Capers..." Oh no! That ain't what's happening.

"Captivity" is a clear look at how the system is ran, though they look like a bunch of words made to sound as if they rhyme, it's actually a poem of few words that describes prison as a whole. "Nasty, cold food, all broken rules, mental torture tools" tells it basically as it is. By breaking their own rules, they break us. They also use other "psychological" tools to break us down. But going weak will only allow them to win. Giving in is giving them the satisfaction. So keep ya heads up and win!

"The Choice" focuses on the decisions se choose to make, whether good, bad, right or wrong. Our lives reflect on our choices. It's only obvious that a lot of us are locked up because of bad choices. This, my friends, makes the world go 'round. It's the power to break free, to succeed, to learn and love, our choices pave the path to who we are, what we are, and why we are the way we are.

"It Hurts To Say Hello" is dedicated to all the fathers who are slammed in the belly of the beast called The Department of Corrections. Let it be a firm reminder that a slab of glass in a visiting booth can't come between the love of a father and his baby girl. And that saying hellos is just as hard as saying good-bye during a visit. It reflects the love of a papa and daughter on more of a personal basis.

Lastly, "Father Time's Baby" is a drastic yet comprehensive look at an inmate who is on the state's Death Row awaiting execution. Unless one is in that/this situation, one has not a hint of a clue as to what he/she faces as time's gears grind slow. The fear, the torment, the stress, along with all the mental anguish that goes along with it. It's a clear-cut message to those who are just beginning life of crime: STOP WHILE YOU'RE AHEAD! Simply put, these are the inner hidden messages of a condemned prisoner — his feelings, his fears, his hurt and his confusion.

People of solidarity, stay strong! Let nada or nobody break you! Show yourselves worthy of the struggle! Defend integrity, but in a peaceful type of manner. Write the Governor, Congress, whoever will listen. Let them know, "Hey! I'm no animal! I'm no piece of garbage! I'm made of flesh. I breathe, I eat, I love, I hate, I laugh, I cry!"

Friends, I am you, you are me, we are one. One people, one nation, one race... One love...

Father Time's Baby

Tick tock goes Father
Time, whose wheels grind
Slow, for I'm his baby
In physical captivity
He's on my side as the hour
Draws near, I am he who
Understands, who cares, whose
Love comes easy

Time! It goes slow
Time! We grow old
Time! Behind these walls
Time! Unanswered calls
Time! Is a second of life
Time! Is on our side

Tick tock, tick tock, tick tock
Who's next to go, we all know too
Well, it's in the news on TV and with
Out pity, Father Time goes on,

He's on our side without mercy
Draws nearer to each hour of
Our deaths, sadistically laughs
Knowing our fate, tick tock, tick tock

Time! Locked in a cell
Time! A living Hell
Time! How he grinds slow
Time! Sitting on Death Row
Time! A nosedive spin
Time! Never free again

Tick tock,
Forgive them God
Tick tock
Oh! Somebody please!
Tick tock
I don't wanna die...
Tick tock
My mind fades
Tick tock
Somebody! I can't feel
My body! Help me!
Tick tock
No, No! No! No!
I, tick, can't, tock
Breath, tick, tock
Tick... Tock...
Bong! Bong! Bong!
Now I lay me down to sleep...
Father Time's baby.

It Hurts To Say Hello
Behind a glass
She sits so pretty
Cute as a button
Daddy's Lil' Girl

Though there's joy
There's a streak of pain
To see her pain
It hurts to say hello

Nobody said life was fair
My baby, she didn't deserve this
She cries, I cry, we both cry
Daddy's Lil' Girl

Through good and bad
She stands strong with honor
Majesty on her side with beauty
It hurts to say hello.

Since it hurts to say hello,
What it's like to say goodbye
Is another story...

Off To Myself

I am in deep thought. I am in a zone.
I am in my own world wishing to be alone.
Not because I don't have love for others.
When off to myself there are many things I have come
to discover. Off to myself gives me time and space
helping me to get into my thoughts with the sharpest
trace.
And time to look inside myself
and learn many things I have never known about
myself.
Things that I have been blind to for so many years.
And when I am off into that zone, I would be driven to
tears.
'Cause then I would be faced with what I had been
running away from for so many years.
And being myself and living for myself,
I always fell so easy into traps that was right before my
eyes and understanding.
And the reason I was not able to acknowledge these
raps
'cause I never had any knowledge of self and no control
over my undisciplined mind. I was always trying to
prove myself and every time I looked up I end up being
trapped up.
And when off to myself was able to see that I needed
some self realization. I needed a wake up call.
Something that would keep me in touch with reality
before it was too late.
My intention was always good. But me and myself was
always misunderstood.
And when I am off to myself in a zone of my own,
that's when I come to recognize that I am at my best
when alone.
I then could see my mistakes clear as all outdoors
just as if the mistake was right up under my nose.
When off to myself, I have noticed
them are some of my greatest moments
when I am able to go beyond my outer self.
This is when my peace comes to me. Something I
thought I could find in myself.

Pride

Pride is a word I took to heart when I was young and
growing up, but I did not have the full understanding
as to what this word actually meant. But everything
was with so much pride. Everything that I done was
with pride. And I had too much pride for all the wrong
reasons. And my pride was always taking me in a very
negative way 'cause I took pride in wanting to be the
best fighter in the world.
And the fights I always took pride in getting
into was always about nothing. Or about a little
misunderstanding. Could have easy been overlooked.
But my pride would not allow me to overlook things of
this matter.
I even took pride in being hateful to the ones who
done me wrong for no reason at all. Not knowing that
hate and pride was two of the biggest stumbling blocks
in my life, and I was not able to see this until many
years later, after my life had been through a rake.
While protecting my pride I had done established
for myself a name for being fool out of pride. And for
being a tough guy thinking I could take on the world all
by myself. My pride always stood in the way of running,
and bad encounters that came my way. Or I went they
way.
But my heart was always the one warning me about
my pride. And I knew in my heart my pride was going to
be my biggest down fall. And this was something I was
not trying to understand 'cause when it came a time
for me to swallow my pride, that was so hard for me
to do. And being free of pride was something I had no
knowledge of unto later years.

MICHAEL MCKINNEY

Since no letter accompanied the poems that follow, we know little about writer Michael McKinney. But we do know he has identified human qualities that all of us have to struggle with — ego and pride. When we read these musings about how ego can lead you into destruction, and how pride can make you feel good about it, we were reminded of the Biblical passage in Proverbs 16: "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall." Mr. McKinney writes us from Florida State Prison.



Ego

The Ego is the mind of being death struck
The Ego mind is the mind with no direction.
The Ego has no understanding.
The Ego jumps at anything.
The Ego takes up any and every challenge, head on.
The Ego don't have time to think its sway around a no-win
situation.
And the reason I am able to speak so much about this ego.
'cause I have always been egotistic type person with a ego
bigger than myself. I was not able to control my ego and my
ego was something much too big for me to wrestle with.
My mind at the time was not strong enough to keep my
ego in check. When my ego was in the mist of throwing its
weight around, my ego became to be a monster that was
large and ugly. And my ego was making me into a wicked
person 'cause ego always fought against my true intention.
My ego always went against what was in my heart. My ego
mind always went against better judgment.
My ego always went against what my inner being was
trying tell me 'cause my soul was always trying to talk to me
and lead my life on to the right path. But my ego mind was
always seeking to destroy others and myself. My ego was my
biggest enemy, my number one enemy that always kept me
falling without any way of keeping myself out of trouble.
Some time my mind would have me thinking the world
was against me and that the enemy was all around me but it
was ego. Ego mind was the one who always fighting against
me as if the ego was my worst enemy. And in my heart
I never wanted to follow my ego mind 'cause every time a
situation came up and it was something that would get me
into some bad trouble, my better judgment would be telling
me how to handle this situation in the right way, without
getting angry without having to use violence. But on the
other hand my ego mind would have me thinking and feeling
as if I had to prove myself in a violent way.

My ego was my biggest enemy, my
number one enemy that always kept
me falling without any way of keeping
myself out of trouble.

DWIGHT ABBOTT From one of our oldest friends comes a remarkable piece written from the other end of life... the end that each of us must face one day. Though he begins by expressing his frustration that no Beat writers responded to him with stories of their own "pets" that have wandered into their cells over the years (like the "pet" rat he wrote about a while back), the piece finally settles into one of the most moving and painful reality checks we have ever read in these pages. Dwight Abbott, who grew into manhood in the California Youth Authority (and had a book published about it called "I Cried, You Didn't Listen"), and has now written a sequel about spending his adult life in the CDC (called "CONSEQUENCE"), looks into a mirror and reflects on a life that began like many of you who are reading these words right now, a life that is nearing its end. It is as hard for the young today to consider the realities of old age as it was for Dwight himself when he was a juvenile in the system, and almost impossible to consider what that means from behind bars. In words of stark reality, that is exactly what this gifted writer and friend puts down here. Maybe his hope that it will spare another youngster from learning this lesson too late will be realized. Mr. Abbott writes from his permanent "home" at Salinas Valley State Prison.

Hello, Who? What? When's that?

After I brought my latest manuscript, CONSEQUENCE, to its end, within a couple of days depression began to suffocate me. Not a complete surprise as I shared a while back with my friend Michel Kroll, that I had concerns how I might emotionally respond after knowing little else other than CONSEQUENCE the last nearly seven months, fifteen to eighteen hours every day. Admittedly, because I had these fears, I now do not know if this is some sort of psychosomatic response, or if my concerns have been realized.

I have always known the distraction writing offers from unpleasant surroundings. It can save us from taking a destructive course when everything around us seems to be caving in on us. Surely, many of you have found this to be when writing letters home, or your thoughts on the walls with the stub of a pencil that has been checked out to you, or while laboring to scratch your feelings into paint or metal with a paper clip staff overlooked, left out where it could be snatched?

Now I am learning of the "withdrawals" that are a consequence on the other end of the spectrum, and I'm searching desperately for a way around it, something else to pen. In the past, when suffering from "Writer's Block," I would, as I have began this here today, write down a sentence, often meaningless, and from it would be born a story. From eleven words came eleven thousand, a very exciting phenomenon I hope we will watch bloom here, right now.

Sometime back, in three parts, a chapter from consequence was published in The Beat (issues 11.36, 11.37 and 11.38). I was surprised none of the young men and women at the juvenile halls, those who read about "Warden," shared with The Beat how they personally related to my experience. Convinced you would respond, I looked forward to reading what you had to say. You see, I know many of you have been punished in this manner, as was I having been in and out of juvenile halls more times than I can remember, a child in trouble with the world. "Been there, done that."

I know for a fact many of you have found yourself in similar situations as Warden and I did. Granted, not likely for the same length of time as me, but in conditions just as deplorable. I know juvenile halls and CYA penal institutions have these stripped down cells I have occasion to write about, even if it is most often claimed by staff those type of cells do not exist. I believe many of you have sat inside those cells/rooms, and others you have been assigned to, and found a pet. Maybe it was a mouse, a spider, a cockroach, a baby garden snake that lost its way, a fly that kept landing on your hand, attempting to make you its friend? Possibly surprising even yourself, you began to "care" about it, and born was a relationship serving, in part, to distract you from your uncomfortable surroundings. When the man took it, maybe stomped it, or it disappeared sometime during the night, maybe naturally died, you felt sad for it and yourself. It was those stories I had been looking forward to reading. Sorry I couldn't get you motivated. My bad.

Here at Salinas Valley State Prison, violence between different factions continues. For this we are locked inside our individual cells most days of each year with but brief, very

brief, respites. We each must find our distractions: My cellie, "Ray," 21 years old, incarcerated since he was 16, reads on the average of one book every two days, thick books. Others exercise, as I once did until I ended in this wheelchair. There are the "clean freaks" compulsively cleaning their cells, and those who write letters and mail them home every day. Then there are those like me, who write non-fiction stories and hope they will some day become published works.

Having been in juvenile halls, I understand how less difficult the immediate situation there becomes when a "passion" for something is discovered, giving to a boring, often destructive, existence "purpose" that is not otherwise present when we have nothing more to do than sit staring at surrounding walls, listening to the petty, persistent, bickering and squabbling, having to raise our hand for permission to use the toilet, where there is absolutely nothing but "drama challenging our minds. I can assure all who read this what awaits in state prison is no different.

Where am I going with this? I don't know. So far not bad since I began all this by writing down a five word sentence. "Hello. Who? What? When's That?"

How about an experience I had a few days back, a real eye opener, as the saying goes? When I came to prison, forty-six years ago. Eighteen years young, I had to suffer through being whistled at wherever I went, as I did the kissing sounds when I walked by with what I hoped was a convincing, intimidating, impressive, tough guy swagger.

Of course, dependant upon how I reacted, I knew it would end, though it did seem, no matter, longer than the couple of weeks it actually was. It stopped and I was grateful, but by then I had killed two inmates who had attempted to take things to another level.

Last Tuesday I looked into the hard plastic mirror glued to the wall, and it came to me why, the likelihood, it has been a long while since someone has whistled at me in the playful manner we have among us. It came to me, it's not because I had butchered two very stupid men with a roofing hatchet, as I had suspicioned the reason to be. It was instead the fact they could no longer be "entertained" by it.

You see, if they teased me now my face would not blush over "smooth" and unwrinkled skin. My blond hair is generously sprinkled with gray, and my full upper lip is hidden behind a thick, salt and peppered mustache. The scar tissue in my thinning eyebrows is much more prominent than when I was a teenage. The once "too large" chest and arm muscles, from hours each day of lifting weights, now sag, and hundreds of tattoos cover skin that had been unblemished. My eyes, once bright with life, are now dull, only cunning can be noted.

No, guys, it dawned on me the whistling did not stop because I had "proven" how tough I was. It ended because I am no longer the "youngster" everyone around here enjoyed making uncomfortable, and putting "on the plex," (complex.) Now it would be too much like "sex-playing" their grandfather. For me, the whistling once to be good naturedly "endured," would today be a "compliment."

This very moment, I looked over and up at my cellie who assists me as my health deteriorates. He is sleeping after having read through the night. For him it has now been six years, and he will be here long after I am cremated. Unblemished and smooth, pale skin, blond hair without gray strands, serving a sentence of 25 years to life for his mistakes, Ray must now make the right choices or he will die here as I am doing, as are thousands of others who have been "trapped in the system" since entering juvenile hall and going on to experience "Youth Authority." None of us listened to that little guy inside of us screaming we needed to make different choices, and for this failure, we must pay the piper, dearly, while waiting for the youngsters to come through the prison gates so we can entertain ourselves.

The experience I've just shared with you was quite a dawning for me. I entered a prison a "choice little morsel," fought, bled and killed to assure my heart kept beating, and now, near the end of the road, I am pointed out as "the old man," my legacy.

It's been a long journey that sort of caught up with me while I looked in that mirror. I was drawn to it, and bent

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forward to take an even closer look, something none of us much like to do, right? We might see things we do not care for, surely would not appreciate about ourselves?

I saw the lines around my eyes that I had chosen not to before acknowledge. Not surprising, my jaw was tight, habitually biting down to hold firmly in place the loose upper denture. Years ago prison guards had knocked out my teeth with the end of a billy club while I hung handcuffed to the bars inside a dark, stripped down cell.

Shirtless, for the first time in years I stared at the ridged scars left by knife blades plunged into my body, seeking to take my air. There are others, puffed up, round, bullet shaped. Then there are those hundreds of long shoelace shaped, scars born from a heavy leather whip that ripped into my skin, a whipping I have never been able to write about, never will. "Wow, this is how it all ends? Doesn't make sense to me."

It dawned on me what all the "old timers" had been trying to tell me as the years piled up, but they couldn't, because I already knew everything. Being that I once was so hard of hearing I had to learn from my own experience no matter one's experience here, his status, position, respect he has earned, nothing, nobody stops the inevitable nor where it begins; there is no escape from the lame and infirm being left behind by those who they had sworn an allegiance with many years before. It is an absolute fact of life in all jungles! It is best understood once it has been rightfully concluded there is no other logical action to be taken by the pack, if it wants to survive, than to leave beside the road those among them that become no longer capable of being a contributory member. It is what it is.

Had I 'heard' what they were saying, what a difference would have been the experience not having to awaken each morning to the sounds of my cellie farting above me as one last time I go over events of the day before, to make sure I had not forgot something I have to deal with this day. How good it would be if my environment was not one in which my last thought each time I leave out my cell is, "Am I going

DWIGHT ABBOTT (CONT.)

to make it back this day," number 16, 790? And counting.

As I think of what has been, it is amazing to me that I could have instead sentenced myself "to life" awakening under fresh, warm, fluffy blankets, clean sheets sliding over my hip, on a bed near larger than my entire cell, cuddled with a warm, smooth, naked body belonging to someone who desires along with me to make us happy together.

"It is amazing" because I know I had it in me when I was a kid to make that choice. No matter what was going on to cause considerable confusion in my mind, I knew then I had choices. Instead, it seemed at the time easier to blame everything I did on what was being done to me. So, I chose "to be down with the homies," who have now left me sitting in my wheelchair out front of #1 cell block because my old body can no longer keep up. Wow, looks like I got it all wrong along the way; sort of began suspecting that a few decades ago, though. Guess I'm just kinda slow.

"Nothing personal, Sonny, it's the way it is," I was told.

Here I am; I have come "full circle." How unexpected... I am now shouting out to others what was told to me so many years ago, while the "fellas" and I joked around, knowing the guy standing up there trying to help us "doesn't have the slightest idea what he is talking about." Asked before I became "the old man" sitting alone if this would become so, and I would have laughed and told you all to "kiss my ass, that ain't never going to happen!"

Okay, now that I got that out, I have to ask: "You going to wait 46 years before realizing it could have been different?"

This work is done, now what? In a couple of days I am going to feel like... wait! I've got it!
Hello, Who? What? When's that?

TERRY MOSES

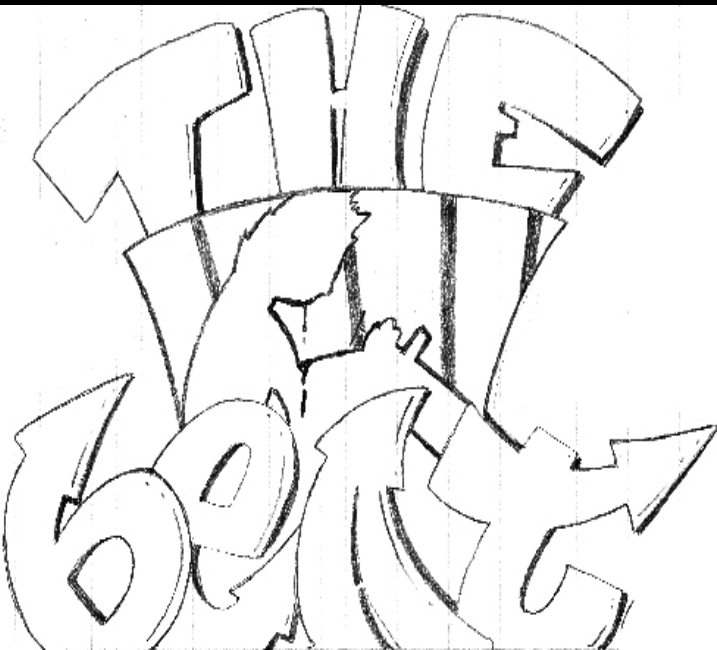
For those of you who feel like you'll be bangin' forever, this next writer is one who will challenge that way of thinking. He talks about the effects of gang-banging from his perspective and though it may not be a popular perspective, he gives an example of someone who everyone knows about and has shared the same perspective. He names Tookie Williams as one who's was involved with gangs for a long time and then woke up and started doing things like writing books to influence those in gangs to reconsider before it's too late. We thank Terry Moses for his contribution. He is writing from Mule Creek State Prison in Ione, CA.

The Truth Is In Us

What's up blood? What's up cuzz? Was all that I heard, and it's a damn shame how what took place next came from two funky ass words, but now we say we're about our blackness but that can't possibly be true, because just for wearing the wrong color your own will stab, shoot or take full advantage of you.

Mothers crying over graves 'cause their kids die before they reach the tenth grade and for a black child to make it past sixteen these days are mighty slim. Bloods and bloodettes, crips and cripettes are caught up in the cycle of madness, and if our ancestors could see what we've become, it would bring nothing but heartache and sadness.

Take Big Tookie for example, it took death row for him to realize that he held so much beauty within himself that hatred and violence wouldn't let him find, but when he did, it almost won him the noble peace prize. Sure he caused a lot of terror on society, but at least he tried to make amends to create a different look, and I pray to God that who ever have troubled kids, they get the opportunity to read his books, because the time has come for us to quit hiding the truth and destroying our youth and understanding should be the beginning while representing a color should be the ending.



RIVARDE DETENTION CENTER

A few months ago we sent some heavy hitters for The Beat to New Orleans to put together a panel about The Beat Within and it's workings, for a juvenile justice conference they were holding out there. We also had the opportunity visit one of their high schools out there and after Hurricane Katrina their resources are next to nothing out there. But anyhow, from our panel we made connections with some people that offered us a tour of one of their local juvenile hall out there and we spoke to the young men and women that were incarcerated there. Instantly, they were taken aback by what The Beat is all about and they began to inquire about how they could get involved. So, we told them that for starters they could write for The Beat Without section and we'd welcome them with open arms as they did us. Here's a taste aka the first installment of that and though it's only three pieces we can tell that these young people really need a platform, such as The Beat, to voice their many powerful opinions and ideas. The Rivarde Detention Center is located in Harvey, Louisiana. Let's make them feel like this is a place they can come to when all else fails.... Look forward to hear from our friends down South in the coming weeks! Bring it on young writers from Rivarde!

Ruff Times

My nickname is Young Tweet and this is the ruff times of my life. Since I have been going through some ruff times like keep coming to Rivarde Detention Center all the time. This not where I want to be in life because I have so much to do in that world instead of being in here wit' no freedom.

I am only 16 years old and finding out the hard way at a young age. Every time I get up I have to get dressed, make my bed, brush my teeth, and go eat breakfast. At two o'clock I have to go to my room for next shift at three o'clock and then I come out of the room and sit down and watch TV in the pod, but what is I'm trying to say is this is not what I want to do everyday of my life.

-Young Tweet

This not where I want to be in
life because I have so much to
do in that world instead of being
in here wit' no freedom.

Doing My Own Thing

What up Beat, my name is Brandon, but my boys call me High Yellow. Growing up I wanted to be a star. I wanted to have lots of money. My mamma tried to keep me on the right track, but I wanted to do my own thing, but my own thing wasn't to do the right thing.

I used to bring guns to school and do all kind of things like that. But now I'm in a detention center in Harvey, LA. I been here since October fourteenth and I will be getting out in February. I want to get out; this is not the place for me. I want to do better so when I get out I am going to stay out.

-Brandon

Sometimes

Sometimes I wish things wouldn't have gone the way they went. Sometimes I wish I should have stayed in Florida with my sister and my mom. Sometimes things just ain't right. So you have to put with it. Sometimes you should choose your friends wisely. But most of all you should watch your time and make it count.

-Anonymous



Growing up I wanted to be a star. I wanted to have lots of money. My mamma tried to keep me on the right track, but I wanted to do my own thing, but my own thing wasn't to do the right thing.

Dealing With Issues

I've been missing for a minute,
But only 'cause I've been dealing wit' some demons.
Issues that's squish you, split you,
And leave you screamin'.
I ain't lost my faith in God;
I'm knowing he's still there.
But when I get educated to go to church,
It's like I don't even care.
I made a promise to myself,
That with you, I'd keep it real.
And that's what I'm trying to do,
Why I'm candid with what I feel.
My pops finally passed away,
Surrounded by loved ones.
Aunts, uncles, brothers, sons, his wife and his cousins.
But I wasn't there.
And that makes all the difference.
I'm suffering 'cause my pride refuses to seek
assistance.
Don't want nobody to listen!
Riskin' my damn sanity.
'Cause I seem to break down when I remember
What's missing from my family.
How it felt like so much was left unsaid.
Unwritten. Unread.
Too much emotion forgotten and dead
'Cause I left it unexpressed.
How I felt he didn't get how much he meant to my
survival.
'Till my mom told me he kept all my poems and letters
Within the pages of his Bible.
I can't put into words what that did to me.
How the dam finally broke, and the tears appeared
instantly.
How badly I felt cheated!
How bad I wanted to put steel in a ninja,
And thrice over, repeat it.
How raw I feel as I sit in a cell.
Efforts to convince myself to be coo' ain't going so well.
The only thing holding me back from vendettas and
enemies
Is knowing that using my father's death to justify
Would be disrespecting his memory
Odd how I function like nothing has changed.
'Till out of nowhere, I remember who's missing again.
Short, hostile attacks that leave me ravaged and raw.
Rest in peace, pops.
It ain't the same now that you've gone.

RAY SANCHEZ JR. It seems as though this next writer has been dropping jaw-dropping lyrics on us forever. We can't begin to express how much we appreciate Ray Sanchez and all of his contributions. In this issue he calls out to the man that is his father because he's moved on to the next life. And Ray is wise enough to realize how important his father is to him, and furthermore, how important good fathers are to their children period. But first he gives us a piece that describes what beef is. And in this piece you can tell that he's been experienced with beef. He knows what he's talking about and there's no question about it when you read this poem. It's a real easy read because his lyrics flow like water from a faucet. He's writing from Pleasant Valley State Prison in Coalinga, CA if you didn't already know and we're sure we'll get more of this heat dropped on us in no time. That's why we enjoy this writer because not only is he talented but he's also consistent. You should see for yourselves...

What's Beef?

Beef is when I see the whole scene
In terms of potential targets,
Bystanders and enemies
Cats who pretend to be,
Harder than they are, but dart from artillery
Homie, you make me feel,
Like my struggling, it wasn't real
The pressure from gangs and steel
Since when have your dinner meals depended on a coke
deal?
Being ghetto, it ain't a fashion
Stashin' yo' coke in caches
Targeted by crooked cops
Who's actions'll get yo' ass kicked
Snatchin' up yo' cash and chokin' out yo' spitters
Livin' hand to mouth
Drinking to blacken livers
Anesthetize the pain wit' exxos 'till yo' system strains
Gettin' locked up in a cell
And losing all that you've gained
The pain, it comes in bits
That accumulate over time
Comfortable on yo' grind, gettin' treated like sewer slime
Automatic suspect 'cause these cops'll pull you ova
Guns stay on the draw
They act like you packin' holstas
Harassed 'till you sick
And still you ain't heard the half of it.
You only got one life to live
And, homie, you riskin' crashin' it.

How I felt he didn't get how
much he meant to my survival.
'Till my mom told me he kept
all my poems and letters
Within the pages of his Bible.

Easy Way Out

Listenin' to C-Bo tellin' me to kill people
I'm wonderin' why all the funnest stuff is illegal
Are we inherently evil,
Or just brought up to be,
Grimier than those who are better of than me?
It seems the most profound thoughts,
Come when I'm drunk
Anesthetized to the grind and the funk
My peoples goin' stupid doo-doo and dumb
Seems like an excuse for having some fun
I own up to my own shhh
Yeah, I was totin' a fifth
Hittin' parties flamed, ready to bust me a lip
How much was bravado? Hollows,
Hiding how I follow
Your destiny be to me an inconvenience, my Rallo,
Can't keep me safe foreva
But all too often,
I found myself with Barrettas
Claimin' to be hard
But soft with bruised egos and doubts
The proof is in the shootings
And how we take the easy way out.

BROTHA ACHIM This next writer is a revolutionary in a whole lot of ways. For starters he uses this great publication to change ways of thinking, offer powerful ideas, and give his perspective on a number of ills that plague this country. But not only does he do that, he also writes about subjects that most people are afraid to write about. And although we don't believe in fighting a particular group because they're oppressive with oppressive tactics, we do believe something needs to change in order for this country to keep from spiraling downwards. This week he tackles, the forbidden for some, term of endearment for others, 'N' word. He gives the perspective of older Black folks as well as the perspective of younger Black folks and then wraps it up with his own conclusion. The same way you would do in a college paper, only people in college are doing it for credit while Brotha Achim is obviously doing it to teach and influence change. He's writing from a state prison correctional training facility in Soledad, CA. We encourage all readers of his work or any work we publish to respond, if inspired to, respectfully.

The Ninga "N" Word

A most profound sounding word when spoken cross-racially in anger and in its entirety, so alarmingly abhorrently — repugnant to many that the general media will only print or speak this word in abbreviated forms(s) to avoid offending its readers/listeners. The history of this word is well known to those who oppose its continued usage and those who continuously use this word are now being ostracized, targeted for censorship, condemnation and reeducation.

Undeniably, historically this word used by primitive, savage white in this country represented the absolute most odious, unconscionable-incomprehensive pathological form of racial oppression and cancerous ignorance in history. Nevertheless and notwithstanding all the painful memories of the holocaust that the African nation has had to suffer and still enduring — it simply does not explain the neurotic-paranoia and near psychosis of 21st Century blacks. Needless to say we are not a monolithic people and our beliefs and understanding are as varied as our skin color.

Unquestionably and indisputably all decent-minded, morally intact individuals would oppose the usage of this word by non-blacks directed at blacks.

This writer is neither "pro" nor "con" to the "N" word usage, Albeit, as a black man if a non-black were to call me the N-word, violence would most assuredly ensue and not necessarily so if another black were to do similarly so. This obvious double standard is called tolerance. Blacks do naturally and should as all other races have more tolerance towards each other than they would towards another race. This is fortunately or unfortunately an aspect of our humanity. While at first glance this may appear discriminatory, but more realistic and accurately put it is called — tolerance.

The Anglo-judicial system is a classical example of this disparate in treatment. Statistics upon statistics have revealed discrimination across the board — white judges are more lenient and tolerant towards white defendants than they are towards non-whites.

Probably to the bourgeoisies black intellect, these double standards make their "con" argument. As to the danger, harm and negativity of blacks continued usage of this nefarious word towards each other. Pointing out: 1) the usage of this word by non-blacks towards blacks 2) its continued wholesale usage may promote anew the usage of this word towards blacks by non-blacks. That it may indicate that it is now ok, chic and en-vogue to once again use this somewhat abandoned, near forbidden word.

Those examples of prophecy do support the "con" argument, but constraint as a means of restraint is a form of cowardice, a surrender to a seemingly insurmountable problem. Logic and intelligence dictates that the word isn't the problem, it is the history of the monsters who coined and used this word to abuse, decimate and destroy that is the problem.

America's 21st Century Neo/Nazism

We are now in the vile grips of fascist/neo-nazism and Nazism this time is "targeted" towards criminals, indiscriminately against all people who break their "race-bias" draconian laws. It is now OK, and socially acceptable to hate, berate and condemn and entire group of diverse offenders, irregardless of their offenses; to publicly call them animals, scumbags and say "fry 'em and watch them die." SS-politicians have begun a propaganda "campaign of unparallel media blitz" to convince the sheep-like frighten public that criminals are the blame for all their economic-woes, moral-deprivaties and current state of decadent society.

Thus, it is NOW OK to genocide by long-term incarceration this "targeted-group". Soon we will all have a family member or friend in prison. As we continuously define aberrant behavior as punishment by imprisonment to justify keeping all of those prison creating jobs and multi-billion dollar industry going. Obviously, all criminals aren't mad-dogs and do not deserve to be dehumanized, brutalized and animalized in slavery/prisons or stoned to death in a public execution. This is Nazi-Germany reborn, the holocaust revisited.

In the atypical American mentality of easy and instant solutions conservative, middle-class blacks would have "us" believe that by blacks eradicating this word out of their vocabulary usage, it will somewhat or somehow in effect eliminate the cancerous scourge of hatred within the hearts of minds of racist white Americans against new Africans — even black intra-racism. I'm sure those blacks who oppose the usage of this word would have an even more comprehensive rationalization for the cessation and condemnation of its usage by blacks.

I confess to having used the "N" word casually and in anger, having also witnessed other blacks usage of this word as the repetitious centerpiece and focal point of their discourse, ad nauseam — ad absurdum.

Needless to say I was annoyed at their limited vocabulary and vacuous repetitiveness of this word, especially in a mixed company, even feeling a tinge of embarrassment. Having witnessed this so-called faux pas and observed the disquieting disgust by some blacks and non-blacks I, not unlike others usually discount the speaker as ignorant and conclude he or she is unworthy of any further consideration or interest.

The pro argument is as persuasive as the "con" argument is against — a vast assortment of rationalizations. Basically, those blacks who are addicted to the "N" word usage contend first and foremost: 1) It is their right to use the word or any other that they choose to use 2) Their usage is in most instances harmless and in many instances a term of endearment. 3) They aren't racist against blacks, nor do they harbor any ill-will towards blacks. And more pointedly; 4) Their multiple variation of change in dialect — usage has divorce this word from its original, hateful, cruel, ugly intent. That sometimes in the history of a word, its meaning changes — even to its opposite. Adding; 5) that their usage is utilitarian, an exclamation and even playful. Seldom, if ever, their usage of the "N" word the cause of violence or hatred. Suggesting that the opposition need let go of the past, forgive, evolve and move on.

Notwithstanding my prior comment, when I genuinely listen to those blacks who have a proliferous usage of this word, who appear to almost have it ingrained in their psyche, a somewhat exclamation of the first order. Then hearing this word spoken from those blacks I have sometimes felt their A) anger B) frustration with America's cancerous racism, C) bravo — machismo, D) Symbol of unity and, E) That they were just clowning and kidding around, etc, etc. In passing I have never felt intra-racism coming from one black towards another.

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The "pro" and "con" arguments are equally postured and both representing legitimate and reasonably held belief. This isn't a debate of right vs. wrong, rather right vs. ultimate right and this is where this debate empties into... in my opinion inter alia.

The "pro" position is one of individual liberty with grave political indictment against the new African Nation that "we" not unlike our forefathers have failed miserably in bringing this white vs. black race war to a just conclusion.

The "con" position is one of contemporary moral ethics, respect cosmetics and image building.

Logic, intelligence and maturity dictates that a word is just a word, a powerless, blameless entity and a simple configuration of recognized alphabets. As noted before, we are not a monolithic people; there are black republicans, atheists, Muslims, gays, hypocrites, uncle toms, etc. Even more so, there are some blacks especially young ones who claim that they have never been the victims of white racism. Therefore, the "N" word has no history of negative connotation of painful psychological memories.

Here lies the crux of this debate. One side sees danger and the other side does not — a paradigm of perception. The opposition's general criticism of those who use this word is that they are simply being grossly insensitive to the feeling of those who are aggrieved by their usage of this word — ignorant and ignoring the painful history of the evil ramification of the 'N' word. Conversely, the other sides counter-criticism is that those blacks who criticize their usage of this word are just bourgeoisie, pseudo-alarmist, who are not in touch with contemporary reality — that what is evil is more or less their conscience bothering them — guilt.

My criticism and counsel to those blacks who have an excessive use of the "N" word — is, you're annoying, continue to educate yourself, travel and get over your limited vocabulary.

My criticism and counsel to those blacks, especially the likes of Bill Cosby, grow-up, you don't own the new African Nation. We are many, completed, diversified, and multifaceted. We are a first people, the original people, the strong, personification of a survivor, the crème de la cream. Cosby need to be mindful that he acquired his wealth as a steppin' fetchin' buffoon for whites.

In no uncertain terms 21st century blacks do not need protection from a jaded, obsolete, antiquated word. My advice to those blacks aggrieved and truly concerned is that they need to concentrate their frustration/anger resource/energies on addressing/solving the vast assortments of ills that the "N" word does and once represented. What isn't needed is a cosmetic, superficial, finger in the dam, victim reeducation program of how to be a better victim and to suffer in silence.

Simply because you do not want to be embarrassed well, shame is good, it serves a purpose. Just maybe if your

African Nation is shamed enough we will stand up and bring the five hundred year race war to a just conclusion.

The "N" word is the extract-descendent of the "R" word (racism). It is puerile and moral cowardice of the first degree for 21st century black bourgeoisie intellect to engage in an abjectly pathetic debate of reeducation and condemnation of those blacks for their usage of the "N" word. When the true cancer, the true case of the "N" is the "R" word. The true enemy of new Africans in America is alive and well and has after all these centuries, not yet been soundly addressed and attacked. This neo-reeducation and condemnation campaign is traitorous smokescreen to divert attention away from black leaderless-ship and blacks in general, strategy-less, complete failure in this multi-century old war against racism in America.

In many respects "we" all owe those Africans whose prolific usage of the "N" word in mixed company and in their music our gratitude. For they have caused a resurgent in intellectual debate of blackness and black consciousness of self-esteem. Each and every time the "N" word is used. It need be a renewed opportunity of awakening and reminder to both blacks and non-blacks — that there is yet an unresolved problem of diseases cataclysmic magnitude in America. All is not right, all is not well and we are not all O.K. it appears as if it is the instructive- intuitiveness almost mystically driven need of many blacks to raise the "N" word up until the "R" word falls.

America must never be allowed to renege upon its promise/guarantees of equality and justice for all. Therefore, it is the unstoppable, never-ending duty of all new African blacks to declare war to the up most in the crusade to ensure that while Americans live up to its promise of freedom, equality and justice from oppression and discrimination for all its citizens, voluntary and involuntary ones — and in the end liberation/reparation/independence and separation — with the establishment of the Provisional Government — Republic of new Africa.

In parting. Despite the anticipated sanctimonious outcry of disagreement to this axiom — there is no universal right or wrong, an experience and the horrors of history clearly detail. Ultimately right is whatever the individual says it to be and is able to impose upon others. In this instance an individual has the right to use whatever words he or she chooses to use. Those who do not approve have the right to inculcate or force the other to cease and desist usage... failing that the aggrieved party simply have the right not to listen and/or to attempt to change the conditions that causes the usage of this objectionable word.

While a severe painful annoyance to some, this debate in the face of "our" unresolved cowardly unilateral surrender in this centuries old race war without honor or restitution is insidiously dishonorable — and this debate is a cowardly diversion.

Logic, intelligence and maturity dictates that a word is just a word, a powerless, blameless entity and a simple configuration of recognized alphabets.

JAMES We always have mixed feelings when people leave from juvenile hall to go wherever they're going, but especially for this next writer who quickly became one of our all time favorites. On one hand we're glad the fiasco and stress of court is over, he's finally going to start his time like he's been wanting to. But then on the other hand we know there will be other things to stress about where he's going and we won't get to see him each week (not that we were able to see him for longer than a few minutes in passing, because he was on a very restrictive program) but it was nice to at least see him if even for a minute. Well, now he's moving on and has written a good-bye piece for The Beat. In this piece he explains his journey in and out of the system, which he started at a very young age. From fights with roommates to runaways from camps, he's experienced a whole lot in his young life and we can tell these experiences didn't break his spirit though they may have been things he wishes he could do over again. He's wise way beyond his years and his writing skills are amazing. These are things they won't tell you in articles written in mainstream papers, which he's had plenty in his high profile case. Leave it up to those articles and he's a vicious animal, a heartless criminal, even considered less than human. But pick up a Beat and read his writings and you'll learn that this young man is more compassionate than most people we know, that he has a giant heart that bleeds for those who've supported him, and most importantly that not only does he accept responsibility for the mistakes he's made, but he also handles the grave consequences to those mistakes better than any of us can. He's a true beacon of strength in this time of turmoil and we admire his persistence. You don't have to thank us, James. We thank you for all you've shared with us and for all you've taught us. He's writing from a Juvenile Hall south of San Francisco, but by the time you read this he may be on his way to the next stop on his journey. You will always have a place in The Beat, James, and we hope the continuance of your journey doesn't discourage you from keeping us posted. We surely will never be able to forget you and your pieces of art. Thank you for all that you are!

Good-Bye

Saludos my fellow inmates and staff to whom these lineas may concern. Before I go any further with this missive, allow me to extend my very utmost love honor and respect with a warm embracement full. Furthermore I hope that as you reside within these brick walls and concertina topped fences that you and your familias are in the best of health and spirits with everything in your favor. That being said I shall proceed to commence with the piece at hand...

So carnales, you find me writing this piece tonight to bid my farewells and to just maybe put some hope in your hearts. I know most of you don't know me, just for the simple fact that since October of '05 I have not been allowed to enter the max units or communicate with other minors for what staff call "security reasons". But just to let you know, I'm just a regular homie like yourselves, trying to get by in these battles that life has thrown at me.

Earlier, I said I bid my farewells because as of the 22nd of February, I'm a young man sentenced to 36 to life and I should finally be leaving this place very soon. I know most homies get all down and out about getting sentenced, especially someone getting sentenced to the kind of time I got, but I can honestly say that I am actually feeling ecstatic about finally being handed my sentence. You see, I feel this way because my whole life I've been coming to this place, and truth is, I'm very tired of being here.

It all started my first time getting locked up, back when B-2 was the "Beaver" unit and B-6 was the Lockdown/Failure unit. I remember after my first week stay in B-6, I was thinking that this place was wonderful. You know, you got to kick it with the homeboys, you got good food, there was a sense of belonging. (I was 12 and didn't know the real haps.)

After that little vacation from the streets, I went back out there unwilling to anticipate the consequences of my actions because consequences meant nothing to me. I came back for a fight that happened at school in which I attacked this person who I thought was my rival but turns out he wasn't. But I got locked up for it anyways because I caught that charge while on EMP.

I forgot to mention, though, that the first time I got locked up was because somebody tagged the hood of a cop car, and they raided every known gang member's house of

Imagine

Imagine if you and I
could hold each other outside my dreams.
I'd kiss your lips instead of my pillow.
But when I'm dreaming with you it's like I'm kissing
your lips
Or so it seems.

Imagine if I was there
to adore that lovely smile of your everyday.
I'd have peace and happiness on my mind
instead of life's unfair play.

Imagine if was there
to wipe the tears from your face.
I'd be your servant
both mentally and physically.
One that you wouldn't be able to replace.

Imagine if we didn't have to imagine
And these moments would be ours to hold forever.
Maybe someday we can turn these moments of our
imaginations
Into reality.
Just maybe preciosa
never say never...

my particular gang, looking for clues to help indicate who done it. Just my luck, they happened to find some clues in my room when they raided it and I had to go down for it. But I share this because when the school incident happened, my EMP gave me a choice of her sending in the boys in blue or I turn myself in. I chose the latter because I seen how much it would disappoint my mother having cops at the house for me.

I came in and that stay just made me like this place even more. I was originally supposed to get out before Christmas, but while in B-6, I attacked my roommate. (Now that I think about it, it makes me laugh because I got off on him for the stupidest reason in the world: a card game.) So this little fight got me a new charge of battery and a extra forty-five days in here. Got me out just after Valentines Day of 2003. But unfortunately my love for this place was at all time high and I came back a few months later for some problem I was having with my PO...

I guess the judge was tired of me and decided to send me to Holden (Ranch) for a four-month stay. I was there for a little bit, doing alright, but some stuff kicked off and I "guess" I started it, so I came back here to be housed in B-9 while I went to court for the new assault charge I caught at Holden. I ended up just getting an additional month and got sent back to the ranch, but was sent to James (Ranch) this time because Holden didn't want me back.

I think James is where I started to smarten up on my jailhouse ways. Here you have a 13-year-old boy with 17, 18-year-old young men, who liked me from the get-go because I wouldn't act childish and they'd shout down the little flecha (knowledge) they knew. I did good there till about my fourth month when all of a sudden I got tired of that place and decided to run with two other homies regardless of the fact that I was on my senior "A" belt.

I wasn't such a smooth criminal though, because after two days on the run, I got caught kicking it at the park. I caught two new charges, false impersonation (I gave them a fake name) and resisting arrest (I ran to the train tracks but being high and falling every few feet, I didn't feel like running any more so the last time I fell I just stayed down and waited for the cops to get me.) I came back and once again I went to the failure unit, B-6. This place appealed to me more and more and I didn't realize then that the judge was giving me chance after chance, because I didn't care.

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After another month wasted here, I was this time sent to Wright Center with a new five months because I switched judges and this new one was trippin' off the last judge's decision to send me to James. So I went to Wright Center with the plans of running because around this time I was "in love" with my baby's mom and I wanted to kick it with her. But to keep it real, after going up that big-ass hill, I said, "Chales, this jaina can wait!"

I probably should have run then because then my life wouldn't have turned out the way it is now. Around my fourth month there with only a month left, I went home on an O-T that from the starting felt weird. Friday night passed, nothing happened, just a night full of beer, cigarettes, homeboys, and weed. (I would go back to the ranch with my handy dandy bottle of clean pee.)

Then Saturday came and that whole day felt even weirder. That day was pretty much spent in the same fashion as the night before, except that night we had a nice little get together at my house and we decided to leave from my pad to go meet another carload of homeboys from the 'hood at a fast food restaurant where my crime was committed.

I won't elaborate because my intention isn't to sit here and brag, but to write this piece in hopes that those homeboys and home girls who are feeling hopeless can see that the end of their rope is nowhere near. So I committed my crime January 3rd 2004, went back to the ranch the next day, got through Monday with no incident. Then Tuesday, January 6th 2004, the detective from the San Jose Police Department homicide unit went to go pick me up. I been here ever since, and I'm sure now you can see why I'm happy to finally be sentenced and get this show on the road.

I can't believe that I grew up in this place. My first month here I would tell myself, "How am I supposed to do a year straight, let alone all the time I'm facing?" But after a year I would ask the same thing about the next year and after the second year I would ask about the third and after the third... Well, I'm working on the third, but I don't ask myself how I'm going to do it, because I know one way or another I'm gonna get through it.

And if it has to be for the rest of my life, then so be it. I was asking for this all along, and now that it was handed to me, I can't sit here and cry about how I don't belong here. Just how when I read about homeboys who want to get out so, so bad, "Just to do it live." Why even have that desire to get out when you and I both know that doing it live is just gonna bring you back?

I mean I'm not saying to drop your lifestyle because if I haven't dropped mine that would then make me a hypocrite,

JAMES (CONT.)

but my big homie once told me that a wise man chooses his battles wisely. It's unfortunate that I've met so many lovely homeboys and home girls in here who really belong out there, for all that potential shouldn't be confined to places like these. But I'm seriously happy that a majority of those good homeboys and home girls aren't in a situation like mine. I'm happy that most of you still have familias who are really down for you.

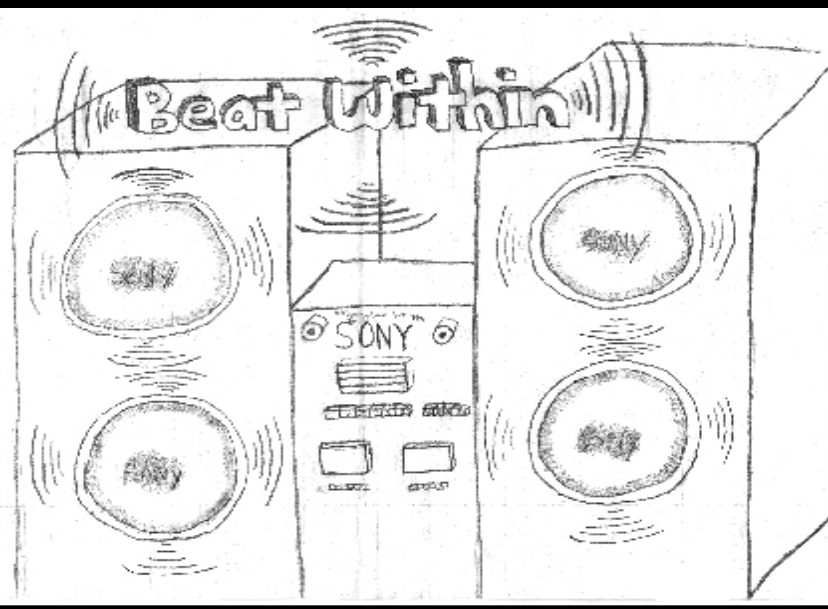
I stay trying to tell the homies younger than me to go to college through my poems and other writings. I really mean it too! It seems that everybody wants recognition, so why don't you go about getting that recognition the right way, in the world, where it's really gonna count? Sure, you could be real known in here or out there, but even that has its complexities because if you're known in here you get out, you're nobody in society's eyes, when all along you have the potential to be a big somebody. And when you're known out there in the lifestyle, it's gonna be because of the jales you pulled, jainas you fooled, and all that other stuff that has no importance whatsoever in society.

But you're probably not gonna listen to me, though, because I'm just a modern day slave to this system who just longs to see my raza come up on the social ladder. Well, on a closing note, I would like to once again say alratos to all those firme males and females that I met here, especially to the homies Mono and Droops. Everybody keep your heads up, with your eyes dry and pointed to the skies because these tough times are only temporary, and someone would always tell me that happiness always prevails if you allow it to.

Mr. Crockett, thank you for everything, Sir. All was and always will be highly appreciated. This piece goes out to you because if you wouldn't have gotten so mad when we would bullshhhh during The Beat writing when we were in B-8, I never would've took my writing so seriously. Nah, just playing, Sir. This piece is dedicated to you, though, and I am highly thankful for all that you have taught me.

There's also a lot of other good staff that I will always remember who also know who they are. Last but not least I would like to say a "see you later to The Beat." Thanks for allowing me to write. I'll keep writing. I'm pretty sure I wouldn't be coming out in the Santa Clara County issue no more, but I will keep writing.

Remember to never let these brick walls break you and especially don't let them make you... Goodbye!



Earlier I said I bid my farewells
because as of the 22nd of
February, I'm a young man
sentenced to 36 to life and I
should finally be leaving this
place very soon.

RICKY QUARLES

We haven't heard from this next writer in a minute, so we're glad he's finally written us again. He reminds us of why we missed his writing so much as he's made some real concrete changes in his thinking and his been practicing introspection to the utmost, so he can learn more about himself and those he holds dear to him. In his piece, 'Loss Of Innocence,' he describes how as a young child who was inherently good as all of us are (we don't come out of the womb with evil thoughts on our minds), but then there are negative influences throughout our lives that cause us to regurgitate those thoughts. And then we get punished for them. But that doesn't mean that's the end — things we learn we can unlearn, so there is still hope. We enjoyed hearing his latest steps on the road to being a better person and we're glad he's shared them with us so we can also take those steps to becoming better people. He's writing from a California Medical Facility in Vacaville, CA.

Loss Of Innocence

As I "learn" about me, I've come to know it is important to be responsible for yourself, it's important to know yourself, so that you can manage yourself, your power (ability) is your responsibility. My goal is to share with you, the reader, why you do what you do! Why? Why do we make the choices and decisions that causes pain and suffering to ourselves, our loves ones, and to the community (our own). What has happened in our lives that compels us and conditions us to accept the consequences of our attitude (thoughts), and behavior (actions), I'm speaking of the violence we do to ourselves and others. Our thoughts lead to actions; our actions lead to your habits both good ones and bad ones; the ones that negatively affect ourselves, our family and friends, our children, and community.

I am studying myself, asking myself, why am I in my current situation? I'm mainly focusing on the part of me that chose to do violence that hurts others and me. I feel this is a good study, the study of self will help me (us) to know myself better; plus I've come to realize that I can't change people, places, and things, only myself. Half the time (or most of the time) we don't know why we do what we do, because we don't take our own inventory the way we take other peoples' inventory that we have no control over. It's funny to know someone else better than you know yourself. If you feel the way I feel about being locked-up, being told what to do, missing life, holidays with family, little (or no) freedom; then we must understand the consequences of our actions and that there are consequences to everything that we do. Most importantly we need to understand two things: one, what leads to the consequences; and two, we can change the consequences once we discover the source.

In the study of self, in discovering self, seeking change to better manage one's self, sometimes you have to go back to your "Loss Of Innocence." Try to understand the cause and effect; to face it, feel it, embrace it, accept it, then do something about it. There are a lot of things that you can do about the abuse that you have suffered, and which has caused you pain; you can choose not to abuse yourself and others. Whatever happened to you IT WASN'T YOUR FAULT! YOU ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ACTIONS OF OTHERS. If they (or whomever) hated on you, you don't have to hate on them. The things that occurred in our lives, in our youth, has to be at least acknowledged by ourselves because this is what self-help is about.

Acknowledging that something is wrong in your life (or your character) and wanting to change it is the beginning of healing. You might not be able to change your attitude and behavior on your own, but you can share your awareness with someone else who can help you change into a better person. At the very least, a healthier person, but it starts with you.

I have acknowledged some painful things that came to my awareness from taking inventory of myself, from interacting with people, from listening to other people discussing their own "Loss Of Innocence" and things that I had forgot, or thought I had forgot, will come to my awareness and if it reflects harm that happened to me. It can (or could) be so painful that it overwhelms me to the point that I can't think straight. That's when I'm most vulnerable. If I'm not focused on keeping myself safe, accountable and responsible, the thoughts, the feelings, and emotions that coincide with that painful thing that I had forgot (or suppressed/repressed) could captivate me, to the point of me making wrong choices and decisions, or even worse, me just reacting without even thinking or considering the consequences of my attitudes and behavior.

I'm in prison right now as a result of mismanaging my power (ability). We all have the ability to choose how to use our power (ability) to choose how to use our power, which is one in the same. One can use his (her) ability (power) to either create (self, family, community) or destroy (self, family, community). Consequences will follow whatever you decide (or choose) to do, whether deciding to create or destroy will have an impact on you and yours; SO THINK ABOUT IT!

AWARENESS + ACTION = CHANGE — You must be willing to change, as well as get tired of the consequences that go along with the attitudes (thoughts) and behavior (actions) that hold us captive. Remember the following:

ATTITUDE + BEHAVIOR = CONSEQUENCES — I have come to know that "WHAT GOES AROUND, COMES AROUND." It is IMPORTANT to accept responsibility for yourself and what you do. It's also important to learn

this early in life. The consequences we all must face; that we produce from the violence, our violence. So, the question is: Where does the violence we do come from? We certainly wasn't born violent. It is a fact that violence, racism, prejudice, bad manners, bad management of self is a learned behavior. SO, WHAT IS LEARNED, CAN BE UNLEARNED!

I learned my violence as a child, mostly because I was a victim of violence, instead of being protected, loved, and nurtured by the adults whose care I had been placed. I was neglected, abandoned, and abused, not necessarily by my mother, but I grew-up without a father. My mother made irresponsible choices and decisions, because of whatever reasons. The problem was that she didn't protect my innocence. She didn't know how to protect it and as a result I lost my innocence at a very young age. This resulted in traumatic effects on me emotionally, verbally, physically, sexually, and spiritually.

My mother would leave my siblings and me with other unfamiliar families who were so-called "baby-sitters." She would leave us with these families for weeks or months. During these times my siblings and I would be subjected to the habits that these families possessed.

You can never expect anyone else to take care of and treat your children better than you can, even for payment. So considering that, even if one must leave your children with baby-sitters, daycare, or even family members, you must be familiar with them. Even family members can cause "Loss Of Innocence" trauma to the children by not being attentive, giving beer to the babies, blowing marijuana smoke in their faces, being emotionally, verbally, physically, and sexually abusive. Giving them bad advice and not supporting healthy behavior and attitudes; the people whom you leave your children with must be responsible and accountable.

I was beat-up, and sexually molested at the age of three years old in some of these homes I was in. My mother never knew of these atrocities, and I was too young to explain what was happening to me. I knew it was not right, but it would be years later that I would understand something of how my authentic (true) self was impacted by violence. That turned into violence that I perpetrated against others, to control and coerce people into doing what I wanted them to do.

I grew up from a baby being exposed to violence (Pandora's box) only to understand that I had to defend myself, but not capable of understanding the consequences (or the impact on my belief system) and how I, or it, would effect others. I also have come to realize that I have harbored resentments and hatred towards my mother because I inwardly blamed her for the pain and confusion I was experiencing. My feelings and emotions were working against me, causing me pain, memories turned into nightmares not knowing why these things are happening to me, not getting help to understand.

It's a struggle learning to cope with emotional trauma on a daily basis: YOUR LIFE IS A MESS. You blame the person who you believe is responsible; for me that person was my mother and society: "They were responsible," so I developed a "I don't give a damn" attitude. I also felt the world was against me and I became rebellious, I acted as if I didn't care, I stayed in trouble, in and out of juvenile hall, jails, and prisons, and drug use added to my confusion.

I developed an image, the opposite of my true self, which was a fake me. I didn't even know who the real me (authentic self) was. The violence and abuse turned me into a manipulating, territorial, possessive, a bully; that's the struggle, the strongest survive, be tough, don't be soft or wimpish, don't trust no one, hurt them before they hurt you, take what you want, control your space, and those around you.

My "Loss Of Innocence" caused me to become aggressive; but for someone else, it could develop into name calling, cursing, gang-banging, fighting, stealing, jacking, learning how to solve problems in a disrespectful way that warrants consequences.

Being put into an adult situation as a child, being told or convinced you are a man or woman of the house when all that is expected from a child is to be a child. They should be encouraged to embrace their childhood. They should have nothing else to deal with as children. They should then be protected, loved, and nurtured. They should be taught good qualities, conditioned to be responsible, accountable, and respectful towards themselves and others, and to be shielded from all violence (especially from those perpetrating it). They need good role models and loving guardians; and if they should be traumatized, professional help is what they need to heal and be restored. A child's innocence is precious and should be protected at all times, because our future and very existence depends on our youth growing up healthy and emotionally fit.

If you have lost your innocence from violence that was done to you and you are suffering as a result, write it down the best you can, get some help and some support to understand who you are, and to understand how you are using your power to make choices and decisions that effect and impact you, your family, the community, and not to mention, your victims.

You are not alone, many people (both children and adults) have had the same experiences as ourselves. We can overcome and encourage one another to raise our own awareness, and do the work necessary to promote change in us to embrace our authentic selves. It's okay to be yourself. It's okay to cry and to be angry. It's okay to share your pain and suffering with others, especially in a support group. It's okay to heal, to get better, and to be successful. Remember this always: **AWARENESS + ACTION = CHANGE**

It starts with you admitting that there is a problem, and don't be in denial. Ask yourself, "Why am I hurting myself and the people I love."

I learned my violence as a child, mostly because I was a victim of violence. . .

what do you think might have been an effective strategy in your life to get your thinking to where it is now without having to shed blood, producing life-long pain for so many?

The Beginning Of The End

Saludos Beaters and Beat-ettes. Before I go any further with this missive/ piece, allow me to extend my utmost love, honor y respeto to you all in full. Furthermore, I could only hope that when these lines do meet your eyes that they have found you in the best of both health and spirits as for in a state of clarity under the guidance of the most high.

Well, damn homies, I must say that these last few weeks have been the hardest of my life. About a month ago I had written a piece in which I had mentioned I would be taking a plea bargain of 34 years with two life sentences. But after thinking about it and analyzing my situation, I decided not to go with that plea bargain, and instead to take my chances with trial. I was strongly advised against this for if found guilty, my sentence would be three times more than that 34 with two "Ls." But I continued to insist on going to trial so my attorney had no other choice but to comply with my wishes.

A week ago we started our pretrial motions and jury selection, and from the start things were not going in our favor, what with the judge denying most of our motions and obliging with the DAs. My attorney kept telling me we should settle because as we were going along, doors just kept shutting for us. She even went as far as to telling me, "Look, to be honest, I really think we're gonna lose!" But my stubbornness wasn't allowing me to hear any of it, so I continued to insist that we go to trial.

Yesterday, November 2, 2006, we empanelled a group of twelve people who were to be the jury in my case. Just by some of the answers they had for the DAs questions, I knew they would be in favor of a conviction. So I stated to talk to my co-partner about how maybe we should consider settling. At first they weren't offering the homie a deal, and me being the one that did the crime that he also got charged for, I felt I couldn't desert him at a time like this. So I talked with my attorney and told her that if the homie gets a deal and takes it then I'll take mine, but if he doesn't, then I will not take my plea bargain and I will be going to trial.

Today, November 3, 2006, I had a visit with my attorney in which she told me that the DA had offered my co-partner a deal of 20 with an "L" and me added a year to the deal I was gonna take which would now be 35 with two "Ls." She also told me that I would be going to court today at 1:30 to enter my plea. I was light weight happy because they offered the homie what they did. But when I talked to him, it turns out he doesn't wanna take it, and insists we go to trial. I was sitting there telling him that we were gonna lose. But he still refused to settle. Earlier in the day when my attorney came to see me here at the hall, I told her I would take it since the homie is taking it, but when she went to go see me while I was in the holding cell, I told her I would be going to trial since my co-partner is not accepting the deal. Little did I know that I didn't really have a choice because it was a package deal, meaning that if one of us didn't take it, the other couldn't take it.

Well, finally after being in the holding cell for about four hours, they took us into the courtroom where my attorney tells the judge that I'm in the situation where if my homie take it, I will, but if not, then no. Hearing this, the judge looks at the homie and ask what he's gonna do. After some hesitation, the homie says he just can't accept a deal. When these words left his mouth, I must admit it felt like my heart stopped. The judge then said we'd be taking a 15-minute recess. Once he exited the courtroom, everybody got on the homie's case trying to convince him. He was still refusing till the DA mentioned that if he takes the deal now, he won't be charging him with another murder that another one of the homies allegedly did. My co-partner's dad was talking to him from the audience chairs telling him that taking the deal would be the best thing for him right now and to just be smart. Like a minute before the judge came back into the courtroom, the homie said "whatever I'll take it."

So today on November 3rd, 2006, my co-partner and I pled guilty to two counts of second degree murder and two counts of attempted murder with a gang enhancement for the home boy and gun and gang enhancements for me — which has landed him with 20 with two life sentences and me with 36 with two life sentences. As I was pleading guilty to these charges that two months short of three years ago changed my life forever, I couldn't help but feel this never-felt-before sadness and wondered where my life got so bad. I could hear my poor mother crying behind me, and I just wanted to get up to comfort her and wipe away her tears. I regret so much all that I have put her through from not listening to her, to disrespecting her for being too strict, when through it all she was just trying to look out for me.

When I couldn't take it no more and I looked back to see her, my mind was flooded with memories of when she would sit me on her lap and tell me in Spanish, "Mijo, when you grow up you're gonna be so successful you gonna have all this money and we could move away to a big house in my country, just me and you." I was also thinking back when she would hold my hand when we crossed the street, or tie my shoe laces that would always come undone. I can't imagine what she felt while sitting there listening to her first-born son plead guilty to murder.

What really broke my heart was when the sheriff allowed for her to come up and give me a hug. Just seeing her face in so much pain and so many tears coming out of her eyes made me want to hold her and tell her that I'm sorry for everything, which is exactly what I did. She told me that no matter what she'd always love me, and I must admit that it took a lot for me not to start shedding some real tears of sadness right there and then. I just wish I would've listened to her when I first started to get into problems.

Hopefully my little carnalitos will learn from my mistakes and realize that this life really ain't no joke. Strive to be something homies, so this cycle of us catching "ells" (Ls) can be broken. Because, yeah, you laugh at this little stupid program here or at the ranch, or you may even laugh at alternative or Y.A. programs, but when your whole natural life is on the line or they're giving you double-digit years like candy, then things just don't seem too funny anymore...

RS, the first time I get to go before the parole board (to be denied) I'll be fifty years old, so watch out for that.

-James

From The Beat: Things are so unnatural in the world of criminal justice — and particularly juvenile criminal justice — that we find ourselves relieved that you were able to take this terrible "deal," not because we approve of the years you're now going to have to do, but only because we agree with your attorney that you would almost certainly be facing a much harsher term if a jury of your "peers" had rendered a decision. It's sick, but experience tells us that is what would have happened. So now you have some certainty in your future, as painful as that certainty is, you can at least begin the long accommodation to it that you will have to make. We know some things about you that may or may not predict how you will do your time, and who you will be when you finally get to walk back out into free air. We know, for example, that you are very smart (you know that, too). We know — despite your crime — that you have a decent respect for other human beings, and a heart that bleeds not just for his own pain, but also for the pain of others. These are wonderful human qualities to have, James, and we hope that prison does not dull these qualities in you. We also hope that some of your carnalitos will see in your situation a serious warning siren, a call to open their eyes to the realities of the world they think they're playing in before the play turns deadly, with all its ugly consequences. If any of you reading this find yourselves moved enough to declare yourselves ready to make a change, we would love for you to write about it. It would be a double gift — one to you who makes the change, and one to James by way of showing him how, even from where he sits, he can still make a difference for the better. Thank you for this, James. We can only imagine how hard it has been for you (and how hard it has been for the families of those no longer in the world because of you...), and how much courage it has taken both to face your consequences squarely and to write so beautifully and sensitively about the entire event. We respect the hell out of you!

No need for further comment. The writing and the responses speak for themselves.

The topics addressed prior to the writings you are about to read were (from 12.09) "Time Or Money?" -We know most of you are self-proclaimed hustlers, and money is the most important thing in the world to you. In fact, some would say money makes the world go 'round. However, time is an incredible resource too, for without time what do we have?

What we want to know from you this week is what's more valuable to you — time or money? And why do you feel one is more valuable than the other? We hope y'all can think outside the box, and not just give us the answer that's off the top of your head, the ones we've read before.

Our second topic, "Would You Rather Change Your Life Or Keep It The Same?" —Has there ever been a time when you thought about changing your life, but you didn't know how to go about doing it? What made you say, "I want to change my life?" What's holding you back? Or do you like your life the way it is, and you don't want to change anything about it? Whatever you answer, you have to explain to us why you either want to change or why you don't want to change. For The Beat, the "why" is everything.

Our last topic, "The Most Unforgettable Character I Ever Met" -We've all met people in our lives who have left a lasting impression on us for any number of reasons. We're not talking about that homeboy or homegirl you love or want to be with. We're talking about that unusual person — the crazy one you met in 7th grade, or the brilliant one that told you something that you; the musician who could turn anything into music or the child who acted like an adult (or the adult who acted like a child.) There are two important parts of this question: "Unforgettable" and "Character." Think about who fits those two qualifications, and then tell us what made them "characters" and what made them unforgettable.

The topics for 12.10 were "A Chance To Speak, But You Can't" -Has there ever been a time when you had something very important to say to someone, or something you were holding inside for so long, but when the time came to speak your mind, "the cat got your tongue" and you couldn't say it? Then, before you knew it, the chance to speak your mind passed. What kept you from taking advantage of the moment? Why was it so hard for you to speak honestly when the opportunity came? Is it easier to say things on paper than to speak them out loud? If so, here's your chance to write what you could never say.

The second topic, "How Would You Tell Someone Who Doesn't Know" -Sadly, we know that all of you are locked up and we also know how awful an experience it is. But what if someone who really cared and who really didn't know wanted to learn how it is being locked up — like a mother, a teacher, a friend? How would you tell this person? How would you describe what you go through on a day to day basis to this person? And be serious, because again, you're teaching someone who really cares and also really doesn't know... What would you say to them about how it is being locked up? What would you say to make that experience real for them?

The third topic, "If Your Life Were A Soundtrack, What Would Your Theme Song Be?"

Lastly, "Be My Valentine" -This week, a lot of flowers will be given, a lot of chocolate will be eaten, and a lot of cards will be exchanged saying "Be My Valentine". So our question is a very simple one: Is love a matter of words or a matter of deeds? Is it more important to say "I love you" or to show your love? Don't just answer this question with one sentence. Give us examples, and share the details.

OK readers, this super extended editorial note mix is coming to a close, let praise this week's POW (Piece Of the Week) writers they are Big Vic (writes 4), Maine Bo, Lucky Loi, Victor, Lil' Taz, Angel Gator, Lil' Snow Rabbit Mell, Jermaine, Roe Ya Boat, and Anonymous, all from the 150 Crew. From SFYGC we have Skittles, Birdman, CeCe (writes two), Cuba, Young Jt, Quad, Deezy, and Jb Money. Last but not least we have Tatizle and Baby G from Marin.

This special hard hitting heartfelt issue goes out to James the writer/ the human being, and all the families that have been permanently scarred by the actions that took place over three years ago, that forever changed their lives. May the victims rest in peace, and may the living find peace and understanding. We can only hope that James will make it his mission to continue to touch us Beat readers and the many young wannabe gangsters from following in his footsteps. (We encourage you to check out James' "Goodbye" piece in The BWO). We so look forward to his future pieces as he takes us on the journey of his young life. See you soon.

I know most homies get all down and out about getting sentenced, especially someone getting sentenced to the kind of time I got, but I can honestly say that I am actually feeling ecstatic about finally being handed my sentence. You see, I feel this way because my whole life I've been coming to this place, and truth is, I'm very tired of being here.

check out the rest of James' BWO piec on page 68

